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DETECTIVE STORIES

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

SEPTEMBER 1, 1922 VOL. V № 116

FEATURE STORY

THE GIRL IN THE CASE

by CARL GLICK

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEATURE STORY

THE GIRL IN THE CASE. By Carl Glick 3

SERIAL STORY

THE TWENTY-DOLLAR PLATES — PART III. By David P. Browne 25

SHORT STORIES

THE JIGGIN' JUG. By John Bradford Main 21
THE GREEN HAT. By Hamilton Craigie 28
TRIANGLE OF HATE. By Joe Burke 35
TOM TURNS UP. By Robert Russell 47
BEHIND THE SCENES. By J. M. Scanland 54

MISCELLANEOUS MATTER

SKELETON OF BARBARIAN TIMES FOUND IN GENEVA 18
SOME FEARFUL SECONDS 19
SURGERY 3,000 YEARS OLD 20
THE STEEL MAIDEN 24
FAMOUS HEALING SHRINE 32
FORMER INVASIONS OF EGYPT 33
AN ALASKAN FOX FARM 34
A REFORMED "FAKIR" 46
FISHING WITH HANDS 53
DOUBLE STARS 59

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Please Take Notice

SOME time ago we published a remarkably clever short story by Donald G. McDonald that aroused considerable interest, and led us to ask the author for a feature story. Accordingly we are now enabled to give our readers a mighty interesting novelette from that talented writer. It will appear in the next number under the title "A Scientific Detective." It is one of those gripping stories that seethe with suspense and interest from beginning to end. We are confident you will enjoy every paragraph.

Unusual care has been taken to select some of the best detective sketches ever written to be published in No. 117. "The Scarlet Scorpion," by Frederick C. Davis, is a story of Chinese crooks brought to justice by a pair of keen detectives. "The Mermaid and the Pearls," by Howard Philip Rhodes contains the love story of a female detective while attending to an important assignment and is written in this well-liked author's very best style. Do not fail to read it. It is a story that the ladies will enjoy. Hamilton Craigie, in his usual forceful style, has given us "A Face in the Mirror," one of those detective stories with a punch that can't fail to satisfy the most exacting reader. "A Clue from the Water," by Merritt L. Allen, contains a surprise finish to a good story. A new two-part serial will also begin in the next issue entitled "When Hearts Were Trumps," by Joe Burke, whose interesting stories you have read in former issues of this publication.

We gave our readers more stories than we announced in all the back numbers and there will be more than those mentioned here in the next number. We have no space to mention the titles, but you may be sure they will be stories of the kind that will please you.

Our selection of the short articles for the next number is particularly good. Indeed, the miscellaneous matter is the best we have thus far been able to obtain. Be sure to leave an order with your newsdealer for a copy of the September 15th edition, so you will be sure to get it.

THE EDITOR.

The Girl in the Case

by

Carl Glick

CHAPTER ONE

DETECTIVE BLAINE was disgusted. He might have known, he told himself, it would be like this. When he had resigned from the city police department and opened a private detective agency of his own he had expected that interesting cases would come his way. Instead he found that he had to give him time to helping hysterical women trace stolen husbands, guard the prima-donna's jewels, and more than once they had actually had the nerve to ask him to help find a missing poodledog. Fine job for a red-blooded man that!

It had reached the point where he shuddered every time a woman put her nose into his private office. He wondered what foolishness it would be this time. If only there would come his way an honest-to-God he-man crime. So he groaned when his secretary told him that a young girl wished to see him.

"She asked if you were good-looking, sir," the secretary explained; "young, had a sense of humor, and besides was brave enough to face unknown dangers."

"And you told her?" asked Blaine.

"That you were," replied the secretary, who, being a woman, was as susceptible as the rest to his good looks.

"Did she give her name?" he asked.

"No, sir."

"Did she tell you what she wanted?"

"No, sir. She said if you wouldn't help her she would go to some one who would."

"Show her in," he snapped.

The door opened and a girl stood on the threshold. Her hair was bobbed, of course. She couldn't have been more than twenty. Pretty, yes, in a dainty, alluring feminine way. She was simply dressed, but her clothes had a fashionable cut and a style to them that told Blaine they had come from a smart Fifth avenue shop. She looked around with a disappointed air.

"This isn't at all what I hoped the private office of a detective would be like," she said.

"And what did you expect?"

"Oh, nothing so plain and business-like. Revolvers on the walls. Autographed photographs of famous crooks. Blood-stained daggers in cases. Relics with a history. Lots of atmosphere."

"H'm," said Blaine.

Then she further angered him by asking: "Are you a clever detective."

"What do you think?" he replied.

"I don't know. That's why I asked."

"Listen," said Blaine, losing his temper; "if you have come here expecting me to help you

find out who has been writing you anonymous love letters, you are mistaken. I don't handle cases like that!"

"Oh, but it's much more serious than that," she said, her eyes wide with amazement and self-possessed in spite of his blustering. "My life is in danger!"

Yet to his observing eye she did not show any of the hysterical signs of nervousness.

"Go on," he urged.

"I can be assured that I have your complete confidence?" she asked. "You won't tell?"

"My dear young woman," he exclaimed, trying to be patient, "if the police and detectives of New York told everything they knew, half the population of this city would leave on the first boat for Europe and the other half would jump into the East River."

"That's interesting," she said, "but a trifle exaggerated. Of course, if you are a clever detective you probably know already who I am."

"I don't. But I'll wager that, if what you say is true, and your life has been threatened——"

"Oh, it hasn't been threatened yet. It's just in danger," she interrupted.

"Your father knows nothing about it. I'll be willing also to wager that said father has a large bank account and is the most patient of men."

"You are quite right. Dad's a dear, but a little old-fashioned. I suppose I had better tell you my name. I'm Mary Saunders." She paused, as if he would be overwhelmed by this information.

But the name meant nothing to Blaine. He was politely silent.

"As you probably know," she went on, "there have been a lot of mysterious robberies this winter. Julia Evers had her diamond necklace stolen. Dear old Mrs. Vanderwalters lost a lot of rare jewels" (Blaine was familiar enough with that name. It was one of the oldest in New York. If only he could have handled that case. But the police had been called in), "and a lot of others, too numerous to mention."

"Yes, I know," he said. "The newspapers have been full of the robberies that have taken place among the Four Hundred."

"But I don't want you to think I've lost anything. I haven't. Only," and she leaned forward, "I think I know the solution to the mystery. I haven't told a soul. I want you to help me!"

"It begins to sound interesting," said Blaine.

"You see, I've had my suspicions right along. That's why I need a detective—a professional one, you understand. All of us girls have been trying our hand this winter at amateur work, but without much success. It's lots of fun; so exciting and mysterious. Well, I've decided to go to the bottom of this affair. I don't care how much scandal I dig up. But I think they suspect—that is, the gang who's been doing this. For I swear it's a gang, with a master criminal at its head."

"Are you trying to kid me?" asked Blaine. "Or are you telling me the straight goods? I don't mind helping you if there really is something to this, but if not——"

"Wait. Let me tell my story. I'm not going to tell you yet how I got hint of who it might be. I want to work this out by myself, with your assistance, of course. I'm not definitely sure. That's why I don't want to accuse anybody until I have more evidence. I told father that I was going to Boston to visit Gladys Austin. Gladys is a good sport. She'll stand by me. My family are at our country place on Long Island. They go there the first of May usually and take all the servants with them. We close our town house, of course. It's all boarded up. Well, I came back to town. Father doesn't know I'm in New York. If he guessed what I was doing he'd put a stop to it. I've been staying at our town house all alone. The first night I wasn't a bit frightened. But the second night some one tried to get into the house. I heard them. They must have been scared away, for after fumbling with the window they left. The next morning I found one of the windows partly undone. Last night whoever it was came back again. He must have a very definite reason for getting into the house. And more than that, I suspect he is the man who committed the robberies last winter."

"Mere suspicion is hardly enough evidence to work on," said Blaine. He felt that she was not telling him everything, and that her reply was only to throw him off the track. "Well, what do you want me to do?" he asked.

"Stay in the drawing-room to-night and find out who it is. We can unfasten the window partly and give him a chance to get in. Then you catch him. Hold him till I have a look at him, then let him go."

"Then you know who it is."

"I think I do, I told you."

"Who is it?" he asked.

She shook her head. "It might spoil everything. I'll tell you in good time, if to-night doesn't bring results. Will you come?"

"Yes," said Blaine. "But I hope you are not spoofing me."

CHAPTER TWO

BLAINE spent the afternoon making inquiries concerning Mary Saunders. He did not know but what the girl who had been to see him might be an impostor. His caution in the matter was rewarded by discovering that there was a Mary Saunders, the daughter of a prominent millionaire, and comparison with photographs of her in the society papers proved that she was the same girl who had asked his assistance.

So that evening he was prepared to go ahead with the case, hoping this time it would be something worthy of his time and efforts.

At eleven o'clock he met Miss Saunders at the appointed place, and they took a taxi to her town home, an imposing structure in the East Eighties.

"I have been dining with friends," she said.

"Suppose your father hears of it," suggested Blaine. "He'll know then that you are in town."

"Not when I dine with those friends," she replied, but offered no further explanation. "We'll go in by the servant's entrance. The front door is securely bolted. I got this key from Peters, the butler. Stole it, not borrowed it. He'll have a blue funk, poor man, when he finds it gone."

Inside the house everything was still. The rumble of the far-away traffic on Madison and Fifth avenues came faintly to their ears.

"Here is the window," she said. "He will come this way probably."

"Do you think he will come to-night?" asked Blaine.

"I'm certain."

"Why?"

She smiled. "I told you I'd tell you when the proper time came, didn't I? All I ask is that you capture the man."

"This seems to be a case of where you give commands I merely obey."

"That was our understanding, wasn't it?" she replied. "I engaged you to help me."

"Meanwhile I sit up and wait," said Blaine, disgruntled.

The furniture in the drawing-room was covered with sheets. They looked like ghostly figures in the light. Mary showed him where the switch was concealed and then bade him good-night. She had informed him that she slept at the top of the house, but had left directions as to how to call her should she be needed.

Midnight came and went. Blaine, who did not dare smoke, sat in the cheerless room in the dark. The minutes dragged by tormentingly. It was long after one o'clock. He must have dozed off to sleep. Suddenly he sat upright. There was a noise in the basement. Some one was trying to get into the house through the window.

Taking a revolver from his pocket, he waited. The window was raised softly. Now some one was climbing over the rail. The window was lowered. Then, cautiously and without the aid of a light, as if he knew his way about, the intruder came closer.

Blaine put up his hand and touched the electric light switch, intending to face the fellow, covering him with his revolver. The steps came closer. They paused outside the door.

Blaine pressed the switch. But the lights refused to come on. Odd, when only a few hours before they had been burning brilliantly. Unthinkingly Miss Saunders had cut off all the lights before she retired. He was not a coward, yet it was not pleasant to fight in the dark.

The man turned and stealthily went up the stairs. Blaine, fearful lest murder was his intention, and remembering the sleeping girl, kicked off his low shoes and followed noiselessly after.

At the head of the stairs the man paused

He turned toward a room at the right. From where he stood Blaine saw him throw a flash light about the room. It was evidently the library.

The man was in evening clothes. Not the usual burglar certainly. Blaine caught a glimpse of his face. An unusual-looking man—thin, sallow features, a square jaw, and deep-set eyes. He felt he would recognize him should he ever see him again.

The man seemed to know exactly what he wanted, for going to the desk at the far end of the room he opened a drawer. Blaine expected to see him rifle the contents. But, much to his surprise, he did nothing of the sort. Instead from his inside pocket he drew forth a small object and placed it in the drawer. Then putting out his flash, he started to leave the room.

Blaine was more puzzled than if he had taken something. He did not call the girl, as he wanted to solve the mystery himself. Whatever was the man's game, he quickly decided to let him play it out. So he stepped back out of the way, and allowed him to go quietly down the stairs. He feared that if he had called Miss Saunders she might have been frightened and would have spoiled everything. After all he had caught a good view of the fellow and would recognize him again. The man left the house the way he came, closing the window softly behind him. The detective had seen that man before and knew who he was. It would be an easy matter to pick him up when he wanted him. In the meantime he meant to investigate the mystery of his nocturnal call.

Blaine waited perhaps ten minutes, then going downstairs, fixed the window as it had been in the first place. Returning to the library, he struck a match and looked through the desk. On the top of a small diary rested a beautiful gold snuff-box. The jeweled lid made him guess its value was great. Blaine slipped it into his pocket with the diary.

He returned to the drawing-room and, sitting down, lighted a cigarette. After a while he dozed off to sleep.

In the morning he told Miss Saunders that no one had come during the night.

"Strange," she said. "He must have gotten cold feet!"

CHAPTER THREE

IN his office that morning Blaine sat thinking of the affair of the night. There was no question in his mind but what Miss Saunders had started on something that would prove interesting. Just how interesting he was to learn later, much to his regret. Perhaps if he had known he might have hesitated about going through with it. And yet he did not hold his life as a precious thing.

He could not help but wonder if she really knew the identity of that midnight visitor. He would have told her of his coming to the house, but he wanted to discover what it was all about himself and not play second fiddle to a woman. After all there was the faint possibility that she was merely using him as a tool; that she had some game of her own up her sleeve.

He was to meet her that evening early. They were to go to the theatre together. She had requested also that he spend the night again in the drawing-room, although he felt certain that nothing would happen.

His secretary interrupted his meditations.

"There's a gentleman wishes to see you, sir."

"What sort?"

"Either the real thing or the best bluff I've ever met. Walking-stick, spats, and a diamond in his tie."

"Probably a bluff if he wears the diamond," said Blaine. "Show him in."

The secretary retired. In a moment there appeared on the threshold a man. Blaine was so surprised he could not think it possible. He was afraid his memory was playing him a trick. He started in amazement, for the man who stood before him was the chap who had, the evening before, broken into the Saunders home.

Blaine's face was like a mask concealing his thoughts as he motioned toward a chair.

"I have come to you in strictest confidence," the man began. There was a penetrating look in his sharp eyes that Blaine did not like. He wondered if the man knew of their first meeting. And yet how could he? Blaine felt an instinctive dislike of him. He was too suave, too polished in his manner, and beneath his seeming courtesy there lurked something sinister

"That is of course understood," replied Blaine.

"I am Kenneth J. Harwell. And if you so desire I can furnish credentials that will satisfy you, I trust, as to my financial and social standing."

Blaine had the feeling that he protested too much.

"I should like to do that," he said. If the man was a bluff, he would call his hand.

Harwell smiled slowly, as if amused at the thought that it was necessary for him to prove who he was.

"Since you insist," he said patiently, and named his banker, his attorney, and his broker. "Will that be sufficient?"

"Quite," replied Blaine, jotting down the names, with the intention of finding out everything possible concerning this man.

"If you are satisfied, can I have your assistance?"

"Go ahead," said Blaine.

"Last evening I entertained at dinner," said Harwell. "I had but four guests. After dinner I was showing them my antiques. I have some very rare things. I was pleased at their delight over what I believe myself to be the prize of the lot—a gold snuff-box that once belonged to Marie Antoinette."

Blaine said nothing.

"When my guests had gone," Harwell continued—"they stayed until after ten, although Mrs. Blair left at nine, having an engagement—I went back to the room where I kept my things. The snuff-box was missing."

"You believe one of your guests is guilty?" asked Blaine.

Harwell lifted his hand protestingly. "I should hesitate about accusing them. And yet I cannot understand who else it could possibly be."

"A servant perhaps," suggested Blaine.

"Impossible. They were not near the room. I lock and unlock the door myself. The only persons in the room last night were my guests and myself."

"Some one from the outside?" questioned Blaine.

"The windows are heavily barred. No. It must have been one of my guests. That is why I wish this handled by a private detective. I do not want the police to know—the scandal, you understand. It must not get into the newspapers. Could I recover the snuff-box I should be willing to have the matter dropped. I would not dream of an arrest. There have been a number of robberies this winter."

"I know. Do you suspect one of your guests as perhaps being the person who has committed these crimes?"

Harwell shrugged his shoulders. He might as well have said "Yes." His manner implied as much.

"Who were your guests?"

"Mrs. Blair, Colonel and Mrs. Simpson, and Mary Saunders. Howard Carson was invited, but could not come—detained at the last minute."

"Whom do you suspect?" asked Blaine.

"Isn't that asking too much? I am not sure, you see, or I would go to the person myself."

"Tell me something about these people."

"Mrs. Blair is a widow. The colonel and his wife are a charming old couple. I met them in Washington. He is connected, as you may guess, with diplomatic circles. Miss Saunders, a pretty little thing, something of a chatterbox."

"And they live?"

Harwell furnished him with their addresses.

"Good. I'll see what I can do," said Blaine. "You have nothing more to tell me?"

"What is there?" and Harwell shrugged his shoulders again. After all, he did have the appearance of being a man of the world, the polished, suave gentleman of affairs. It made it all the more puzzling.

After he had gone Blaine inquired of the references Harwell had given him. The answer was in that mild, good-humored tone one receives should he ask the nearest policeman who was mayor of New York. Of course Mr. Harwell was known to his bankers, and favorably known, so it seemed. Why should Blaine be so ignorant as to ask? The man's social position was unquestioned and his financial standing perfect.

And yet Blaine had seen him enter a house in the dead of night like a common thief.

The case was beginning to prove interesting. Blaine wondered what it was all about.

Late that afternoon Miss Saunders phoned him, saying she would be unable to go to the theatre with him.

"I believe it would be better if we were not seen together in public," she said by way of explanation. Yet she requested him to come to the house at eleven o'clock.

That afternoon he decided on a bold stroke. He would see Colonel Simpson. He had met the colonel several years before when he had been a member of the New York police force. The colonel had been one of President Roosevelt's aides. Blaine had been assigned to special duty during one of his visits to New York, and had at that time become friendly with the colonel. Undoubtedly he would remember him.

Fortunately when he called at the hotel where the colonel was stopping he found him in. When he made himself known the colonel was genuinely glad to see him. They chatted about old times for a while, until at last Blaine brought the conversation around to the purpose of his visit.

"You were at Mr. Harwell's last night for a dinner," he said.

The colonel started. His wife, a gentle old lady with snow-white hair, who was present, turned pale.

"Why, yes," said the colonel.

"There's no use beating around the bush," Blaine went on. "Mr. Harwell has come to me for assistance. He says he lost a gold snuff-box. I thought perhaps you might remember it and tell me what it was like."

He wouldn't have been so outspoken, but he knew the colonel to be above reproach, and certainly the last man in the world who would stoop to a petty theft.

The colonel looked at Blaine, then at his wife.

"Maria," he said, "hadn't we better tell this young man?"

His wife nodded.

The colonel rose and stepped into the next room. He returned in a moment with something in his hand.

"I don't know what to make of this, Mr. Blaine," he began. "Now I'm not a kleptomaniac, nor is my wife. Neither do we walk in our sleep, nor covet other people's goods. We are both a little too old-fashioned to be interested in collecting antiques. And what use would we have for a snuff-box that once belonged to Marie Antoinette? And yet—here it is!"

He handed a snuff-box to Blaine. It was the exact duplicate of the one that Harwell had left in the desk in the Saunders library.

"How it happens that we should have this in our possession I do not know. Not more than an hour ago my wife discovered it in *her* bedroom. I am certain I did not take it. And I am equally certain that Mrs. Simpson did not. Yet here it is. Of course I shall return it immediately to Mr. Harwell, but how to explain is beyond me. I have tried to reach him on the telephone, but he is not in. I shall go around there to-night."

"If you don't mind, colonel," said Blaine, "let me have the snuff-box, and say nothing to Mr. Harwell about it. I wish I could explain, but I can't just yet. There's more to this than merely the disappearance of a snuff-box, I'm afraid."

"Certinly, certainly. Anything to help you. What do you think it's all about?"

"I don't know definitely—yet."

"I shouldn't have asked," apologized the colonel. "But if I can be of assistance you'll call upon me?"

"Oh, surely. Thanks! And I may need you," replied Blaine.

He added snuff-box number two to snuff-box number one.

He did not know Mrs. Blair, but decided that he would risk asking her if she too had a snuff-box in her possession. Mrs. Blair lived in a tall apartment building on Riverside Drive.

The pompous colored doorman told him that Mrs. Blair was at home. He rang for the elevator. He had to wait a few moments until it dropped down from above. The door opened, and who should walk out but Mary Saunders. She stared a moment at him, and then, without a sign of recognition, hurriedly left the building.

"That's funny," said Blaine to himself.

A trim maid let him in. In a moment Mrs. Blair appeared. Blaine was enough of a judge of human nature to know that the well-bred, middle-aged woman who stood before him was no more of a thief than Colonel Simpson or his wife.

"I have come on rather a peculiar errand," he began.

"Yes."

"You had dinner last night with Mr. Harwell?"

Mrs. Blair looked at him in amazement. Blaine felt something like an idiot approaching her in this fashion.

"Yes," she said, "I had dinner with Mr. Harwell. Are you his secretary?"

"No. I——"

Just then the maid came into the room and told Mrs. Blair she was wanted on the phone. Murmuring her excuses, she rose and left him, coming back a few moments later, an odd look on her face.

"Who sent you to see me?" she asked abruptly.

"I came on my own initiative," he answered. "Mr. Harwell has lost a gold snuff-box. I did not know but perhaps you could tell me something about it."

"I know nothing whatever concerning it," she answered, her eyes narrowing.

"But surely——" he pleaded.

"I have nothing to tell you," she said, rising, thus putting an end to the interview.

Blaine explained carefully who he was. But that seemed to make no difference.

"I can tell you nothing," she repeated.

"Not even to help me out?" he questioned. "It may save you future trouble. Miss Saunders has just been here to see you."

"How do you know?" she said, looking at him in amazement. "You must have seen her as she was leaving."

"I did. What has Miss Saunders to do with Mr. Harwell?" he asked.

She seemed surprised at his question. "I do not know," she answered truthfully.

"Don't you think it might be wise to tell me what you know," he said. "For you do know something. Of that I am certain."

"You have no right to question me in this fashion. It is absurd. How dare you presume! I have nothing further to say to you. Good-afternoon."

After all, he realized he really had no right to question her as if she were on the witness stand. His was not the power of the police. A private detective can go so far and no farther. If any one refused to answer his questions, and he was unable to frighten them into talking, there was nothing he could do.

"I am sorry you won't give me your confidence," he said. "It may perhaps save you more annoyance later on."

"Good-afternoon!" was her only reply.

He went back to his office, more puzzled than ever. About an hour later the telephone rang. It was Colonel Simpson speaking.

"I've tried to get you before," the colonel said. "Thought you might be interested in knowing that shortly after you had been here Miss Saunders came."

"What did she want?" asked Blaine.

"Supposedly to call on my wife. But she managed to bring Harwell into the conversation. Asked us if we had seen him since last evening. We both thought that odd, of course. I didn't know but what every little bit of information might prove valuable to you."

"It does. Thanks."

"I say, old man, you couldn't let me in on this, too, could you? I've been craving for a little excitement."

Blaine smiled to himself.

"Perhaps in the morning I'll give you a ring."

"Do, do," said the colonel eagerly.

Blaine hung up the receiver. Evidently Mary Saunders had some reason for asking Colonel Simpson this question. To-night when he saw her he would ask her to tell him. He felt that he must know her side of the affair before he went any further.

Meanwhile he decided that it might be wise to see Harwell again. He went to his apartment on Park avenue and was admitted by a sleek, evil-looking Jap valet, who informed him that Mr. Harwell was not at home. Blaine stated his business and said he would wait. But the valet shrugged his shoulders and told him that it would not be worth his time, as he did not expect Mr. Harwell back before late in the evening.

Blaine felt certain that from the other end of the hall some one was observing him from behind the thick curtains. They stirred ever so slightly, and yet there was no window open that he could see.

"Tell him I have been here," he said.

The valet, either unusually thick-headed or else purposely dumb, requested that Blaine leave his card and, coming close to him, even insisted that he write on the back of the card

in pencil the hour. Blaine thought this odd, but did as the man requested. The door closed softly behind him, and he went out onto the street, feeling uneasy at the man's attitude and manner.

He reached in his pocket for a cigarette, but discovered that his case was missing. Surely the Jap didn't take it from him. How absurd to believe that any one could pick his pocket. He probably had left the case in his office and thought no more about it.

The hour for his appointment with Miss Saunders drew near. He was to meet her on the corner near her home at eleven o'clock sharp. Blaine was on hand ten minutes before the hour. He paced up and down, but Mary Saunders did not appear. Midnight came and went and still she had not come. He began to believe that something had gone wrong. He walked by the house. It was dark and silent. Not even a glimmer of light from the upper windows. The night watchman eyed him suspiciously.

At half-past twelve he turned away. Miss Saunders had not come. And there was nothing that he could do. Perhaps in the morning she would send him some explanation. Yet he was puzzled and, it must be admitted, a trifle worried lest something had happened to her. But there seemed to be nothing that he could do.

He waited until long after one o'clock, and then went to his lodgings.

The first thing that struck his eye in the morning paper were the headlines announcing that during the night a murder had taken place.

"Kenneth Harwell, well-known New York Clubman and Millionaire, Found Dead In His Home."

So ran the headlines.

Blaine read the brief story. Nothing much was known as yet. The story had evidently been rushed to press at the last moment. The murder had occurred late in the evening. Mr. Harwell had been found huddled on the floor of his library by his servant. He had been shot through the head. The revolver was not to be found. The valet claimed that no one had been admitted that evening. Mr. Harwell had dined downtown, and returning home about nine o'clock had taken a book and spent the evening reading. The valet had been in the back part of the apartment, and claimed to have heard no sound. Immediately upon discovering the body he had called the police. That was all he knew. It was also all the police knew at the time the story had gone to the papers.

"H'm," said Blaine, "this complicates matters!"

CHAPTER FOUR

WHEN the detective got to the apartment building he found a number of newspaper reporters and a crowd of morbid, curious people trying to gain admittance. The doorman, evidently overwhelmed, had called for assistance from the police. A sergeant, whom Blaine had known in his police days, was on guard. He asked the sergeant who was in charge upstairs.

"Detective Adams," he was told.

Blaine whistled beneath his breath. Adams and he had been rivals in the old days. They had never been on friendly terms. Adams had always resented Blaine's success. If it had only been some one friendly Blaine thought that possibly he might be allowed to work on the case in an official capacity, helping the police, especially since he already knew certain facts that might prove of very great value. However, he decided to offer his services to Adams, and persuaded the sergeant to allow him to go upstairs.

When Adams saw him he frowned.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"I came to help you," began Blaine.

"What can you do?" sneered Adams.

Blaine shrugged his shoulders. "Try me and see!" he said. Certainly he wasn't going to tell Adams what he knew unless the man showed some spirit of friendliness.

"Business bad," said Adams, "so you want to interfere with an affair of this kind? Something real to take up your valuable time!"

Blaine was angry at this insinuation. "You know my past record," he said. "And if I could be of assistance——"

"This is a real man's job," said Adams.

Tell what he knew after this? Well, hardly. He turned away to keep from completely losing his temper.

He would go ahead in his own fashion. And if he could solve the affair, going over Adams's head to do it, what a feather that would be in his cap. While he knew nothing, of course, as to who might have killed Harwell, still he did have a trump card in his hand that was worth holding.

The first thing he did was to go and see Mrs. Blair. She seemed anxious to talk to him.

"I was hoping you would come again," she said, "especially after what has happened. I have seen the morning paper. It was silly of me to act as unfriendly as I did yesterday afternoon. But I had no idea this was serious. You were quite right, Mary Saunders had just been here. And while we were talking she phoned me; she had seen you come in and asked me not to tell you she had been here, nor to answer any questions you might ask me. She said she would explain later. I am always glad to humor Mary; she's a dear child and invariably playing a prank of some sort. I've helped her out before in different ways, and was willing again. She's often kept me amused. I thought it was nothing serious, of course, and would hear the details in due time. She said she would phone me this morning. I am waiting for a call from her."

"She was to meet me last evening, but she did not appear," said Blaine.

"Do you think——"

"I do not know what has happened to her. If she does not call you I shall start searching for her immediately. Will you tell me what she told you yesterday?"

"Why, yes. It was really nothing at all. We had dinner the evening before, as you know, with Mr. Harwell. Mary dropped in yesterday; she often comes to see me. But she asked me the most peculiar question. She wanted to know if I had heard from Mr. Harwell as yet. Silly thing to ask, wasn't it? I told her 'No,' of course. Then she made me promise that when I did hear from him that I would let her know immediately, no matter what it was. I promised, thinking perhaps it was all a joke of some sort. Tell me what is it all about?"

"I do not know," said Blaine honestly.

"Do you think this child has any connection with his death?"

"I am afraid so!" said Blaine.

Mrs. Blair turned pale.

"If I had only known yesterday," she said, "I would have kept her here with me. What—what is it all about?"

"I do not know. We shall have to wait word from her."

Mrs. Blair rose and paced the floor nervously.

"We must be patient," Blaine said. "Tell me, what do you know of Mr. Harwell?"

"Very little," she replied. "He was just an acquaintance. He had always seemed popular with a certain crowd at least. Mr. Harwell was well received wherever he went."

"Did you ever have any suspicions against him?"

"Suspicions? No. Why should I?"

"Did you ever think that perhaps he wasn't exactly what he claimed?"

"And what did he claim? I will admit I never liked the man. I have often wondered why people made so much of him. But that child——"

"We shall have to wait until we hear from her," Blaine repeated. "One more question, Mrs. Blair. Do you know anything concerning a gold snuff-box?"

She looked at him in astonishment.

"Nothing," she replied. "You asked me that yesterday."

He rose. Should Miss Saunders call won't you let me know immediately? I shall be in my office until noon."

Getting back to his office, he found awaiting him a summons to appear at the coroner's inquest, which was even then being held.

"They have tried to reach you all morning," his secretary said.

Blaine went to the apartment immediately. When he appeared he found the inquest in session. Detective Adams, seeing him come in, smiled to himself in triumph. Blaine wondered what he had up his sleeve. Looking around, he discovered to his surprise that Colonel Simpson was present. He could not make up his mind as to how much he would tell. If he divulged everything he knew the case would be taken out of his hands. And yet, if he held

anything back, it might make things unpleasant for him. He would wait and see what happened.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE room was very still as the Jap servant finished his testimony. He had merely repeated the facts in the case as told by the morning newspapers.

Blaine was the next man called.

"Were you acquainted with the deceased?" asked the coroner. Captain Adams stood by his side. Blaine wondered if Adams would prompt the coroner to ask him certain questions.

"I had seen him before," answered Blaine.

"Under what circumstances?"

"He came to my office."

"For what?"

"Seeking my services. He had lost something which he valued. He asked me to help him recover it."

Adams leaned forward and whispered something in the coroner's ear.

"Yes, yes. In good time," the coroner replied tersely. Then he turned to Blaine. "Was what he had lost a gold snuff-box?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Blaine.

"And did you find it?"

"No!" He looked at the colonel as he said this. The colonel frowned.

The coroner paused, then asked: "Is this the snuff-box?" And held forth a gold snuff-box exactly like the other two already in Blaine's possession.

"I believe it is," said Blaine calmly. "It answers the description Mr. Harwell gave me."

"You were here in this apartment yesterday?" said the coroner suddenly.

"Yes."

"What for?"

"I came to see Mr. Harwell concerning this matter. I wished more information. You have my card. I left it with his servant. I even wrote the time on the back. It was late in the afternoon."

"Did you see Mr. Harwell?"

"No!" replied Blaine impatiently. "His servant told me he was out."

"And you did not come back again?"

"No."

"Under what circumstances did Mr. Harwell lose this snuff-box?" was the next question.

Blaine told him.

"Then he had guests at dinner the night before? Did he tell you who these guests were?"

"Yes."

"Did Mr. Harwell tell you who he thought had taken the snuff-box?"

"No. If he had known he would have gone to the party in question himself, and not have come to me," said Blaine, repeating his conversation with Harwell.

"Did you interview any of these people?"

"I did."

"Who?"

"Mrs. Blair and Colonel Simpson and his wife."

"Then you didn't see Miss Saunders?"

"I could not find her."

Again Adams whispered to the coroner, who abruptly changed his line of attack by asking, much to Blaine's relief, who did not want to tell what he knew concerning Mary Saunders: "What did the colonel have to tell you?"

"That he did not steal the snuff-box."

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

Colonel Simpson rose in his chair, as if to interrupt, then thinking better of it, sat down again. Detective Adams had such a self-satisfied air that Blaine was annoyed. The coroner leaned forward.

"Colonel Simpson has already testified," he told Blaine pointedly. "And we have also learned from Yakama, Mr. Harwell's servant, the story of the dinner party."

"Then why did you quiz me?" questioned Blaine.

"I wished to see if you would tell the truth. You have not. Colonel Simpson confessed to us that he gave you the snuff-box. How do you account for that? And why did you tell us that all he told you was that he did not steal the snuff-box? I will tell you why!" He lifted his hand, imposing silence. "Because you returned here at ten o'clock or later last night with that snuff-box. You left it in the table where we found it. Do you realize, Mr. Blaine, that you were the last person to be

with Mr. Harwell, and the evidence is such that I can place you under arrest, charged with having murdered Kenneth J. Harwell!"

Those in the room stirred expectantly in their chairs. Blaine laughed outright. It was too absurd. He had never before in his experience seen any one jump so hastily to conclusions. He had no doubt but what Adams had inspired this false suspicion. The man must have disliked him a great deal to want to get him out of the way in this fashion. A petty method of settling old scores. He wondered if they had planned to frighten him into betraying himself.

"Wait a moment," he said composedly. "It seems to me that your evidence is very slight. I did not return here last night at ten o'clock. I can, if necessary, prove a perfect alibi. Nor did I return to Mr. Harwell the snuff-box that Colonel Simpson gave me. As a matter of fact, I have that particular snuff-box in my pocket. And here it is!"

It was the coroner's turn to be surprised.

"Duplicates!" he said in amazement, comparing the two snuff-boxes.

"Yes," said Blaine, "perhaps you are able to explain it."

"Are you?" asked the coroner.

"No!" lied Blaine. "But I think, should you withdraw from me the charge of having murdered Mr. Harwell, and allow me to work on this case, I may in time come to a satisfactory explanation."

Adams frowned. Then he leaned forward and whispered to the coroner.

"Such a procedure is not customary," said the coroner. "However, we will allow you to work with Adams under his orders."

"I prefer to work alone."

"Why?"

"So that I will have the credit for what I may discover. Past experience has proved to me that he travels fastest who travels alone."

Adams's face was purple. He understood what Blaine meant. The enmity between the two men had arisen during a certain affair in the past when Adams had taken the credit for a clever bit of work that Blaine had done.

"Is that all you know concerning this affair?" asked the coroner.

Blaine hesitated a moment, then replied: "Yes!"

"Have you interviewed any one else who was present at the dinner?"

"Mrs. Blair. She knew nothing."

"And Miss Saunders?"

"I have not seen her." Yet he wondered what would be the result should he tell of Mary Saunders's part in this affair. But he thought it wiser for the present not to give this information away. The time for that had not come yet.

During this examination by the coroner Blaine had noticed Yakama, the Jap, eyeing him intently. The man's face was utterly without the expression of an emotion. Yet his eyes burned with an intensity that was disconcerting.

After another whispered conference with Adams the coroner said: "That is all. I hope you will assist Adams in this affair."

Blaine returned to his chair, relieved. Mrs. Blair, who had been waiting outside, was next to be called. She confirmed what Blaine had told. When asked if she knew where Miss Saunders could be found she replied that she did not know. She looked at Blaine pleadingly, but he shook his head. He was as much in the dark concerning her whereabouts as she.

The result of the coroner's inquest was that Kenneth Harwell had been murdered by parties or party unknown. After the rest had gone Blaine remained behind with Adams, his enemy.

Adams, in his self-important manner, bustled about the room where Harwell's body had been found. He was plainly irritated at Blaine's superiority in having discovered some evidence that might prove valuable.

"If you don't mind," said Blaine, "I'll look around a bit."

"Not at all necessary," blustered Adams. "I've gone over the room thoroughly."

But Blaine went ahead in his quiet, efficient manner. A chalkmark had been drawn on the carpet indicating the spot where the body had lain. Blaine learned that he had been shot through the head and had fallen toward the fireplace. Evidently the assassin had stood near the door.

"Could nothing be learned from the Jap servant?" he asked.

"Nothing. The man's dumb," replied Adams.

"H'm," said Blaine. A vague nervousness came over him. Again he had that feeling of being secretly observed; that sense of some one watching him that he had had the afternoon of his first visit. But he went on looking about the room. He noticed that Adams was watching him quietly from the corner of his eye.

Suddenly a bright object under the divan near the fireplace caught his attention. He walked over. Adams's back was turned. He stooped down and picked up the object. It was his own cigarette case!

How did it happen to be here? He had missed it first yesterday. His impulse was to put it in his pocket. Probably he would have done so if Adams hadn't spoken.

"Find something?" he asked, turning around suddenly.

"Yes." And Blaine held forth the case. Fortunately for him it was not marked with his initials.

"Where did you find this?" asked Adams.

Blaine indicated the spot.

"Funny I never noticed it," said Adams, scratching his chin. Now Blaine knew he would not have admitted this if there hadn't been some reason back of it. His mock puzzled air betrayed him as a poor actor. Ten to one he had suspected it belonged to Blaine all the time and had planted it on purpose. However, they would have to prove it was his case. He wondered if the Jap had taken it from him when he had been here yesterday? That was the only way to account for it.

"Cigarettes in the case?" asked Adams.

"Yes."

"H'm. Same kind as you smoke."

"Yes, and according to the advertisements there's some ten million others in the United States. Probably one of those ten million committed the murder," said Blaine dryly.

Adams flushed angrily.

"Your flippancy is out of place," he exclaimed.

"Well," said Blaine, "what do you want me to do?"

"Help us to find the person who killed Harwell if you will."

"And how would you suggest going about it?"

"See here; don't try to kid me. Find that Miss Saunders and try to discover to whom this cigarette case belongs. Then report to me."

"Very well, sir," answered Blaine with a calm face. And to himself he added: "Meanwhile I'll keep an eye on you, too!"

CHAPTER SIX

MUCH to his surprise, when he got back to his office he found Colonel Simpson waiting, and with him a distinguished-looking middle-aged man whom he had never seen before. The colonel introduced him as Mary's father.

"We have come to you," said the colonel, "in a great hurry. Mr. Saunders has received this afternoon a letter which we want you to read."

The note ran as follows:

"Your daughter is in our hands. For her safe return we expect ten thousand dollars. If this will be paid run a statement in the Personal Column of the morning paper. Should you play us false your daughter's life will be the penalty."

It was typed on a sheet of plain white paper. Blaine held it to the light. He smiled.

"What do you think?" said the colonel.

"That we are dealing with some crude bunglers. I had expected clever crooks at least."

"Of course I shall pay what they demand," said Saunders.

"No!" replied Blaine.

They looked at him in surprise. Mr. Saunders began to remonstrate.

"Just a minute," said Blaine. "I have been expecting something like this. I have known since yesterday that she was missing. I suppose you have thought it odd I haven't made any effort to try and find her, but I knew sooner or later they would play into our hands. They have done that now. It is time now we were putting an end to this affair. I wish I knew whom I could trust. This is a case where I do not know who are friends or who

are enemies. Colonel, have you two policemen whose honesty you can vouch for?"

"Yes."

"Get them for me immediately," he requested. "Meanwhile, Mr. Saunders, rest assured that your daughter will be safe by midnight to-night."

"Then you know something that you didn't tell at the inquest?" asked the colonel.

"A great deal. I discovered something the other day which is going to prove very valuable. At first I thought it only a bit of damn foolishness. I was mistaken." He then instructed Colonel Simpson as to the part the two policemen would play.

The colonel gasped.

"It is most unusual," he said, "but I place confidence in you."

"This is a game of wits," replied Blaine. "They have tried to incriminate me and failed. Now my turn comes."

He reached for the phone and called Detective Adams, asking him to come to his office immediately, as he had discovered a new bit of evidence that would prove important. Adams hesitated at first. He preferred Blaine to come to him. But Blaine replied by saying that certain pending events would not let him leave. He succeeded in arousing Adams's curiosity.

About half an hour later Adams blustered into the office to find Blaine alone, smoking a cigarette.

"Sit down," said Blaine, as if master of the situation.

"What's the idea this time?" asked Adams. "I haven't much time to waste. Why did you bother me by sending for me?"

"Just wanted to talk things over," said Blaine, eyeing him intently. "A friendly little chat."

"If you think——" began Adams.

Blaine interrupted him with a gesture. "I am curious, Adams," he said, leaning forward. "Tell me: just what is your share of the ransom for Miss Saunders?"

The surprise was so complete that for a moment Adams was speechless. He stared in amazement.

"What are you trying to insinuate?" he blustered.

"You know what I mean!" replied Blaine. "You have a hand in this matter, and you can't deny it. I have proof!"

"Impossible!" blurted out Adams.

Blaine smiled. "So you admit it," he said triumphantly.

"I admit nothing. Are you crazy?"

"No. This afternoon you tried to corner me. You tried at the coroner's inquest to get me accused of the murder just because you suspected me. You even went so far as to plant my cigarette case on the floor, hoping I would put it unnoticed by you into my pocket. You were wrong. I did not act according to speculations. So you could not arrest me on that bit of evidence. A crook does some clever things. But when we play fair we are apt to be a trifle more clever. Jim Adams, I know all about your past. I can make it so hot for you that New York will be too small a town to hold you. It is such men as you—few, thank heavens—who disgrace their profession. You've been hand in hand with Harwell from the beginning. He was a society blackmailer, and you gave him protection. I know his method of working: inviting people to his house, losing something valuable, accusing his guests, planting the lost article on them in such a manner that they could not explain, and then forcing them to pay to keep quiet. More than one affair of that sort has been settled out of court to avoid scandal. Those snuff-boxes he planted on Colonel Simpson—and others—were bought at an antique shop over on Lexington avenue I learned upon investigation. When Harwell came to me I suppose he thought he would be able to drag me into his net as well. I know a great deal that some of our best families wouldn't want known. But this time he was dealing with the wrong man. I have proof of this; more proof than you suspect. There is but one way out for you."

Adams was silent, his face pale, and his fingers twitching nervously. From his desk Blaine drew a revolver.

"You have heard," he said, "of the Japanese way of saving one's honor. I suggest that you do likewise!"

Slowly Adams reached for the gun. He took it in his hand. His fingers closed over the trigger. Jumping to his feet, he threw back his chair and grinned.

"I don't know how you have learned these things!" he said. "I suppose you think you are clever. You are—too clever; for this time you have played into my hands. You know too much. Dead men tell no tales!"

He pulled the trigger, but no report followed.

Blaine lay back in his chair and laughed.

"I am too modest to admit my cleverness," he said. "But grant me this: I would not place a loaded gun in your hands and be alone with you. That gun won't go off!"

"Damn it!" and Adams threw the revolver from him.

"It has succeeded in proving to me that I am right in my estimate of you. You are a crook! And I've discovered it at last!"

"What are you going to do with me?" asked Adams, completely beaten.

"Let you go!" replied Blaine smilingly.

"Let me go?" echoed Adams in great surprise.

"Yes. The door is open. But wait a moment. You wonder why I am doing this? Did it never occur to you that perhaps I might also be one of your kind? That I, too, might be playing the same sort of a game? My dear Adams," and he rose and placed his hands on the other's shoulders, "why weren't we friends long ago? We could have done so much together. You think I am double-crossing you. Isn't my letting you go proof that I'm not? I could arrest you so easily. But perhaps I may want a slice of that ransom for Miss Saunders. Would two thousand dollars be asking too much? I did not know there was anything like $10,000 at stake, otherwise I should have declared myself sooner. Saunders was here this afternoon. I have advised him to pay the money. What is your answer?"

He pushed the door open. The outside office was deserted.

"How do I know you are on the square?" growled Adams.

"I am giving you your freedom. I'm not even asking where the girl is. Nor do I want you to tell me who killed Harwell. And you know! Between the two of us we can fail to discover any evidence. In time people will forget, and it will be but another unsolved murder mystery. I can keep you from making mistakes, and you certainly made one when you typed that note to Saunders and used government paper. The water-mark furnished the final link in arousing my suspicions. Well?"

"You'll get your money," said Adams, and he turned away. The door closed after him.

"Quick," said Blaine, after his footsteps had died away, opening the door of the closet and letting Colonel Simpson and Saunders out. "You heard?" he asked.

They did not know what to say. After what Blaine had told Adams about himself being crooked, they were not certain that even he could be trusted.

"The thing to do now is to follow him," said Blaine, not attempting to explain. "He knows where she is, and will probably go there, or at least in some way give her hiding-place away. That's why, colonel, I had your two men watch below."

The outer door of the office opened. Adams had returned. He had done it purposely, thinking perhaps that Blaine was trying to double-cross him. When he saw that the detective was not alone the truth dawned upon him. He slammed the door to furiously. Blaine plunged after him.

He was too late. The elevator door closed in his face. He ran down the stairs, taking them in flying leaps. Never in his life had he rushed down a flight of stairs in such a hurry. Three floors down. He got to the ground floor just in time. The elevator door opened and Adams stepped out.

The next moment Blaine had thrust a revolver against his ribs and pushed him back into the elevator. Adams turned pale. A tough-looking man loitering near the entrance witnessed this strange scene. Pulling his cap down over his forehead, he hurried away.

Safely in the office again, Blaine tied Adams to a chair.

"I thought to work it another way," he said. "Now tell us where Mary Saunders is!"

Adams made no reply.

Blaine threatened him with his revolver.

"You'll never find her alive now," said Adams at last.

Mr. Saunders groaned.

"Why?" demanded Blaine.

"One of my friends was waiting for me at the entrance. He saw you bring me back,

You've played your cards wrong this time!" said Adams, a look of evil triumph coming over his face.

"Must we force you?" said Blaine. "I can be as cruel as you and your gang."

"Not torture?" cried Saunders.

"Yes. Torture!" answered Blaine. "We have no time to lose. It's the girl's life or his."

From his desk he drew forth an object that made Colonel Simpson, a hardened veteran of many wars, and used to the sight of death, shudder. It was an instrument of torture with which the renegade was very familiar, and he looked frightened.

"I'll tell!" said Adams, sinking listlessly forward in his chair.

He gave the number of a house on the lower East Side, together with the password and directions to get in.

"I'll go with you!" said Mr. Saunders.

"No." ordered Blaine. "You stay here and guard this man till I get back and expose him to his superiors." He spoke to the colonel in the outer room. "Have your policemen follow me. If I do not come out of that house in ten minutes, have them break in!"

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE early dusk was falling as Blaine hurried from the subway. To the jostling crowds he was only one more worker, homeward bound, weary from the day's toil. He made his way through the noisy streets to the address Adams had given him.

It was almost to the East River. Above the steel girders of Brooklyn Bridge loomed like the webs of a spider in the gathering darkness. The buildings huddled close together. The strange foreign population of this part of the city surged around him. He picked his way through the chattering crowds.

At the end of an alley was the place Adams had told him he would find. It appeared to be the rear end of a cheap store. Blaine rapped three times on the door. The door was softly opened.

"I am one of you," said Blaine to the Armenian who let him in. Silently the man led the way. There was a door at one side. The man indicated it with a nod.

Blaine pushed it open. Ahead was a long dark passage. He went fearlessly forward.

Suddenly he felt stifled. His arms were pinned behind him. A sack had been thrown over his head. He struggled to get free. It was useless. He was soon overpowered. His feet were bound with ropes, and then, as if he were a child, he was picked up in strong arms and carried forward.

The murmur of lapping waters came faintly to his ears.

This was their game, was it? God, but he hated to die like a trapped animal. Why didn't the men come? He had told them ten minutes. Two would have been long enough.

He was carried down a short flight of steps and pitched forward on the floor. The air was close and damp. His brow was wet with perspiration. The sack was removed from his head.

He was in a dismal basement, lighted by a dim, flickering candle. Seated before him on a box was the man he had seen run from the office building. He struck a match to a cigarette and blew the smoke in Blaine's face. The two ruffians who had brought him stood at one side.

In the centre of the floor was a yawning hole. Below he could hear the gurgle of water. He knew his fate. Yet time was precious, and if he could hold out long enough.——

With a jerk of his hand the man on the box indicated a door at the far end. The man opened it and dragged forth Mary Saunders. Her hair was disheveled, her clothes were torn, her face pale and wan.

"My God!" murmured Blaine, seeing her in this plight.

When she saw that he, too, was a prisoner, she screamed. The men laughed.

"Tried to double-cross us!" said the man.

Blaine struggled to get free.

"No use." His captor turned to the others. "Tell Yakama we have them!"

Thank God, time was slipping.

A door at the back opened and the Jap servant of Harwell appeared. He rubbed his sleek hands together with glee when he saw his prisoners.

"Both?" he said.

The man on the box nodded, flicking the ashes from his cigarette. "They've got Adams," he explained. "What will we do with them, Yakama?"

The Jap, an evil smile on his face, indicated the yawning hole.

"Which goes first?" The man rose as he asked the question.

"Blaine!" said Yakama. He smiled sinisterly at Mary, who shuddered and turned her head away.

"Wait!" said Blaine. "I'm not going to whine. I see it's over with me. One puff at a cigarette? Thanks. And tell me one thing; dead men tell no tales. Who was it killed Harwell?"

Yakama smiled.

"Whom do you think?" he said.

"You!" answered Blaine.

Yakama shrugged his shoulders.

"Why?" asked Blaine.

Again a shrug of the shoulders.

"As you say," said Yakama, "dead men tell no tales!"

"You are clever," said Blaine. "No one will ever find out. But at least we have one of your gang, even though I pay the penalty!"

They drew him toward the hole. His hands were still bound. But a moment's agony, and it would be over.

"Another puff?" he cried.

There was a pounding at the door. The panels of the wood gave way.

"Thank God!" muttered Blaine with intense relief.

The door crashed open. The men who held him turned and fled through the back door. Yakama, seeing that he was too late, gave a wild cry like an animal in distress. He plunged forward. The waters below closed over his head.

Later when they were congratulating Blaine, he shook his head.

"It wasn't my work at all," he told them. "I give the credit where it belongs—to Miss Saunders. You see, if I hadn't discovered her diary in her desk the night that Harwell planted one of the snuff-boxes there, I would never have been suspicious of Adams. The whole story is here. One of her friends was being blackmailed by Harwell. No wonder his social position was what it was. He forced his way in, and his victims did not dare deny him. Miss Saunders's friend came to her asking for help, and Miss Saunders wisely went to the police. But Adams said he could not protect a thief unless he was paid, too." He turned to Mary Saunders. "Why didn't you appeal to a higher authority?"

"I wanted more proof," she replied. "I wanted to see if they wouldn't try their game on me. They were anxious to silence me, you know. And it seems Harwell did try to victimize me, but you baffled him."

Blaine handed her the diary. "I shall not tell everything I read there," he laughed. "I can keep a secret!" Then to her father: "Better keep an eye on your daughter after this. It has been a narrow escape. If she had only told me in the beginning, what a lot of trouble it would have saved."

"But think," said Mary, "what an exciting time we would have missed!"

Blaine groaned. "The woman of it!" he said.

SKELETON OF BARBARIAN TIMES FOUND IN GENEVA

WHILE digging a trench in his vineyard, at Chancy (near Geneva), a peasant found a human skull and bones placed in a sort of crypt.

These remains date apparently from the time of the great Barbarian invasion; they were lying on a sheet of limestone.

Another interesting discovery has been made in the town of Geneva on a spot where old houses are being pulled down. The workmen have brought to light many rows of well-preserved oak statues 9 feet high. They mark the place where the shore of the lake stood at the time of the Romans. It is not yet known whether they formed part of the Gallo-Roman port of Geneva or supported lake dwellings. They are at a distance of 450 yards from the present shore of the lake.

Some Fearful Seconds

IN the summer I got a nasty squeeze from a big python in the Jardin Zoologique at Antwerp, which laid me up for several days. I had observed this snake, a female, about 14 feet long, in one of the dens, and from the white efflorescence about her lips knew she was suffering from caries of the jaw, with ulceration of the mucous membrane, so fatal to snakes in confinement; and having pointed this out to M. Fekemann, the resident director, I obtained his permission to make a trial of an ointment which I believed I had found efficacious in the early stage of the disease among my own snakes.

The four reptile-dens in the lion-house at Antwerp are not so commodious as those in the London Garden, notably in the absence of proper tanks, but are extremely "pretty"—lots of artificial rockwork framing a large mirror at the back, which has a very natual effect; so that what the poor snakes lack in water they make up for in looking-glass. I came on the following morning, armed with my ointment; but the lady had betaken herself into a crevice of the rocks, where one would scarcely catch sight of her. There were other pythons in the cage, some of them nearly twenty feet long, some not more than five or six; but, though they projected their heads and commenced to hiss, they did not attempt to attack; and the keeper, an intelligent man, who spoke French, said they would not come at us if we did not touch them.

A little one jumped harmlessly at my leg as I stepped over him. For three days the pythoness remained in her rock retreat; but on the fourth I caught sight of her at the top of the cage, and at once climbed up and brought her down. The poor thing's mouth was in a worse state than I had anticipated. She came down quietly enough, and though nervous, was not spiteful and allowed me to handle her.

Now, as ill-luck would have it, the regular keeper was absent on this particular morning, and his place was filled for the time by another from some other part of the Gardens, who spoke nothing but Flemish, of which tongue I am as profoundly ignorant as he most certainly was of the creatures under his temporary charge.

I went into the den with him, taking it for granted, of course, that he was accustomed to snakes, and gave him the box of ointment to hold until I was ready to use it. When I had brought the pythoness fairly down to the floor, I gripped her hard by the neck, which had the effect—us I intended it to have, and as it always has with snakes—of making her open her mouth. I pressed her head away from me at the same time, to prevent her catching hold of any part of my clothing, in her effort to bite. In her fright and rage she drew her body up across my back, and twisted her tail round and round my other arm.

All that I now required of the keeper was, by teasing or pinching her here and there, or by unwinding the tail when necessary, to cause her to shift her coils constantly, and prevent her resting long enough on one spot to apply undue pressure. My face I could protect for myself with the left hand. This, I concluded, he understood, as a matter of course. I turned around to make a sign to him to be ready and give to me the ointment, when, judge of my dismay as I caught sight of his stolid face, with a sort of dull impartial interest on it, looking at me through the glass in front, and the door closed on the outside! He had got frightened by the noise of the other pythons, and had quietly gone out again.

I was about to make an impatient gesture, when in that instant the serpent tightened on me so suddenly and violently that I momentarily lost consciousness. I then found myself staggering about the den, fighting for life. I expected to feel my ribs giving way every moment, yet my chief fear at the time was of

falling through the glass. I pushed the reptile's head away from me with all my might, lest it should cross my breast, and I can remember catching sight of myself, a mulberry-colored figure, in the mirror. I knew, too, that I was tramping about over the other pythons, who, furious at the disturbance, were now darting about the den above and all about me in every direction; and I exerted every energy to keep my feet, for I had presence of mind enough left to know that if I went down it would be all over with me. The heat was stifling. I could bear it no longer; the cage spun madly round and round before my eyes, and everything seemed to flame and roar.

I let go the head. The snake twisted sharply back over my right shoulder close to my face, but did not bite me, and slid off on the ground. I just recollect falling against the door with outstretched hands, but nothing more until I found myself sitting on the steps outside, coughing violently, while the phlegmatic keeper was putting a hot key down my back, for some occult reason. I brought up a little blood and drank a little brandy, after which I soon got better; but I was not well enough to walk home, and the bruise in my side did not fade for many a day. I suppose the whole affair did not last more than a few seconds, but I found it quite long enough. Fortunately the snake had only a small part of her body across my left side and back; had she encircled me with a whole coil I should have been crushed like an eggshell.

Curiously enough, my left arm was quite paralyzed, and I did not fully recover the use of it for a week. I did not know it at the time, but she must have pressed her tail under my armpit, and so compressed the nerves. The accident was one of the stupidest and most preventable in the world, and was entirely owing to my taking the wrong man into the cage to assist me. I may add that I went in some days later with the proper keeper, and performed the operation, not only without danger, but without the least difficulty.

That serpents may be discriminately affectionate toward individuals, beyond the mere instinctive absence of fear, every one who has kept them must know. To those who have not, I should be happy to allow my own pets to prove their case. Can a snake have sufficient intelligence to be jealous? Jealousy is perhaps the nearest approach to a rational attribute, showing some mental process of logical inference or deduction, which animals evince. I don't press the point, but merely give the fact that Totsey, my boa, one of the gentlest and best-tempered of snakes, who lives in a cage in perfect peace with two pythons, an anaconda, a rat-snake, a wasp-snake and several others, will invariably bite them if I take them up when she is on my shoulder.

SURGERY 3,000 YEARS OLD

SURGICAL operations of the most delicate nature have been performed for at least 3,000 years, according to an Egyptian papyrus which Dr. J. H. Breasted of the University of Chicago has been translating for more than a year. He expects to take two more years to complete the translation. Doctor Breasted presented his translation before the Chicago Medical Society recently.

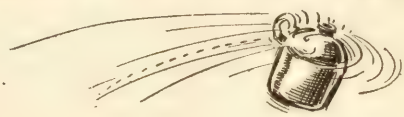
According to Doctor Breasted, the papyrus describes the performance of such operations as trephining of the skull, draining of jaw ulcers and setting of fractures.

The papyrus, more than fifteen feet long, was purchased from an Egyptian in 1858 by Edwin Smith. His daughter presented it to the New York Historical Society after her father's death, and the society sent it to Doctor Breasted recently to be translated into English.

The Jiggin' Jug

by

John Bradford Main



CHAPTER ONE

"GET out!" said Police Lieutenant Byrnes.

"But 'tis true, sor," reiterated the desk sergeant. "I saw ut with me own eyes, sor, and Denny here saw ut too."

"Now, listen," said the lieutenant; "you know just as well as I do that jugs don't climb down off shelves and do jigs in hallways; not in the hallways of *this* station, anyway."

Patently bewildered, but doggedly affirming the truth of his report, Desk Sergeant O'Toole stood fast.

"I tell ye, sor, this jug *did*, and we both of us saw ut! Ut come a-bouncin' and a-jumpin' out there in the hall. Out of the room where we've got all thim confiscated stills and things it come, sor. And ut did a regular Irish jig right there in the hallway."

"Any—er—spirits in it?"

"Wasn't nothing in ut, sor. Ut just jigged—a big five-gallon jug, a-jumpin' and a-poundin' there on the floor."

"And——"

"After ut had jigged for a while, sor, ut started off down the hall. Believe me or not, sor, I chased ut and caught up with ut just when ut was up-endin' utself on uts handle. Denny helped me carry ut back and put ut in the storeroom again."

"How about it, Dennis?" the lieutenant asked.

"'S true, sir," said the young man seated at the station switchboard. "I was sitting right here—I'd just got my last box call for the hour—when I heard a bumping and a scraping, and Sergeant O'Toole says: 'Denny! Come 'ere!'

"'I can't,' I says. 'I can't leave the board.'

"'To h——l with the board,' says the sergeant. 'Come 'ere—quick!' and all the time the thumping and bumping was a-going on, so I put the buzzer signal on the board and went over beside O'Toole."

The operator hesitated.

"Go on," said Lieutenant Byrnes.

"Well, sir, it was just like the sergeant says. There was that d——d jug a-twirling and a-jigging up and down! Me and the sergeant watched it for maybe two or three minutes. Honest, sir, I even caught myself beating time to the blamed thing!

"Then it started rolling down the hall, and O'Toole ran after it, and me after him, and he caught it, just as he says, a-balancing on its handle right at the head of the stairs leading to the street. And then him and me picked

it up and carried it back into the storeroom and put it on a shelf."

"Was the storeroom door open, then?" the lieutenant asked.

"Open, sir."

"Where were the rest of the men?"

"Out with the wagon, sir. There'd been an alarm turned in five minutes earlier. The lock-up keeper was down in the cell-room. That accounts for 'em all. But no! George, the janitor, was sleeping somewheres upstairs."

"There wasn't any one in the storeroom?"

"No, sir. I'm positive of that."

"H'm." The lieutenant turned away. "Well, I've got my work to do. We'll tell it to the captain when he comes."

By noon the next day news of the "jiggin' jug" had leaked out and was going the rounds of the department. Harbor Street Station, scene of the jug's alleged misbehavior, found itself the butt of departmental humor. And when the third deputy commissioner of police, in rebuking an errant patrolman, told him, "You'll be being transferred to Harbor Street if you don't quit seeing things," the roar of laughter that swept the force was passed on to the city by newspaper reporters who thus enlivened an otherwise dull afternoon.

To add, as it were, insult to injury, a reporter for the *Telegram* came forward the following morning with a signed statement by a Harbor street patrolman, who solemnly averred that on two occasions during the past month he had stumbled over mysterious jugs in the station hallway.

"I just put 'em back, an' d——d the janitor for being careless," explained the perturbed patrolman when questioned by Captain Armstrong as to why the finding of the jugs had not been first reported to him.

"Were the jugs full or empty?" the captain asked.

"Why, one of them had some sort of moonshine in it; not much, though. The other was empty," was the reply.

"And each time you found 'em they were just standing there in the hall, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Not 'jigging?'" sarcastically.

"No, sir."

"Standing in the same place each time you found them?"

"Yes, sir. Right in front of the office door. That's how I came to stumble over 'em twice."

"How's that?"

"Why, sir, I bring the wagon sergeant's report up to Sergeant O'Toole every time the wagon comes in after a call. Each time I stumbled over them jugs I was on my way in with a report."

"And when you put those jugs back, was the storeroom door open or closed?"

"Open, sir."

"Wha-at? And I suppose you think now that those jugs hopped down off their shelves both times and slid out into the hallway just on purpose to trip you, eh?"

"N-no, sir, I——"

"Get out of here," said the captain disgustedly. "Keep your mouth shut after this when your newspaper friends ask you questions. And have Sergeant O'Toole report to me as soon as he comes in."

CHAPTER TWO

TWO weeks later and Harbor Street Station is wrapped in silence.

Desk Sergeant O'Toole sits atop his high stool making a preliminary entry on the blotter. Operator Dennis puffs languidly on a cigarette, chair tilted back, feet cocked up on the switchboard. A desk lamp and the smaller globe over the switchboard cast deep shadows around the walls and into corners of the room. The hallway beyond the open door is a gray pit, shot with flickering blacknesses as the sergeant moves slightly under the lamp. The silence is intensified because the patrol has just gone out, bell clanging viciously, exhaust wide open. O'Toole lays down his pencil, lips moving silently as he scans his writing.

Bump! The sound is almost inaudible. O'Toole does not hear. Dennis is dozing in his chair.

Thwack!

Too pronounced this time to escape notice. The sergeant jerks upright, staring hard into the grayness that is the doorway.

No sound.

Quietly O'Toole eases himself from his perch. His eyes are gradually becoming accus-

tomed to the dim radiance cast by the desk lamp into the hall beyond.

And there, floating in mid-air, the sergeant beholds the ghostly outline of a jug—a jug that, even as he looks, begins to jig up and down in a series of short, stiff jerks!

O'Toole is paralyzed. Dennis, dozing at his post, is unconscious of what is going on. The sergeant's head, mouth open, tilts backward and forward like that of an automaton as his eyes follow the movements of the jug. His left hand is gripping the edge of the desk, the knuckles livid in the glare of the electric light. With his right he makes futile and seemingly aimless motions behind him.

Jerk! goes the jug; *jerk! jerk!* And now, as though satisfied that its part has been played, it floats steadily ceilingward.

O'Toole blinks, recovers himself. His right hand flashes forward.

Bang! Crash!

Smoke fills the room. Through the doorway comes a wave of alcoholic fumes. O'Toole has leaped across the desk and has plunged through the door. Operator Dennis, startled into incoherency, is shouting through his mouthpiece, trying to make the detective bureau understand that a bomb has been exploded at Harbor street, and that every available man must be rushed there at once.

In the hallway, feet crushing the shattered fragments of the jug, stands O'Toole, still looking upward. The revolver in his hand is trained on a dark patch in the ceiling, at the edge of which are faintly discernible two blinking white spots.

"Come down!" the sergeant is shouting.

And from above:

"Ah cain't, boss; Ah cain't! Ah's kotched!"

CHAPTER THREE

IN the captain's office next morning were assembled the lieutenant, O'Toole, Dennis, and two others, one a trembling darky, and it was to this last named that the captain first addressed himself.

"Well, George," he asked, "what have you got to say?"

"Nothin', Ah guess, cap'n," was the reply. "Ah suah knowed yo' all would kotch me. Ah *tol'* 'at man that!"

The negro nodded vindictively at his companion. The latter promptly twisted his lips in a disgusted snarl.

"*Who* got caught?" he demanded. "Nobody ain't got nothin' on me."

"Oh, yes, we have," interjected the captain. "The bureau squad found five gallons of moonshine whisky in your house last night, and Lieutenant Byrnes found that two-gallon jug of wine down in the cell-room.

"Murphy, as a highjacker you make a good lock-up keeper! You ought to have had more sense than to try to swipe the stuff out of the station."

The lock-up keeper scowled.

"That d——d——" he began.

"Cap'n, suh!" the negro interrupted, "that man's a-tryin' to push all th' blame on me! Ah'll tell yo' the truth of it, suh. He done it all, an'—an' Ah helped. He gimme a couple o' bottles o' bum whisky f'r helpin'.

"Ah had a wire with a hook on th' end of it, suh, an' Ah'd lay upstairs over th' trap-doah in th' hall ceilin' an' let down th' hook. Mistah Murphy'd sneak up from th' cell-room an' git a jug 'r a bottle from th' storeroom, an' 'tach it onto th' hook, an' Ah'd hist it up.

"Ef there was time, an' I had 'n empty jug, why, Ah'd let it down into th' hall, an' Mistah Murphy'd put it back in th' sto'room so's they wouldn't nothin' be missed."

The janitor grinned.

"Tha's how come that air 'jiggin'' jug, suh. Ah thought Ah heard some one a-comin', an' Ah was tryin' t' git mah hook loose frum 'n empty. 'Nen, when it come loose, Misteh Jug done toppled over, suh, an' started rollin' down th' hall."

The Steel Maiden

IN an adjoining tower is a room where there are preserved a number of very curious instruments of torture used in Nuremburg hundreds of years ago, before the days of jails and penitentiaries. There are thumbscrews of the most approved patterns, and helmets for gossiping men and women. A singularly cheerful piece of furniture is a large, heavy wheel, on one side of which stands out a large, sharp piece of iron. In the glorious days of old an offender who had to be punished with the wheel was stripped naked and firmly bound to a plank, face downward. The piece of iron on the wheel was heated hot, and the wheel was rolled up and down and across the victim's back till justice was satisfied or the victim was dead.

Inasmuch as the spike was long enough to go half-way through the man's body, and was always heated red-hot, the victim generally died, and justice was entirely satisfied. It was not as expeditious as the guillotine, but it was just as certain. The only man who ever survived it was adjudged a magician because he survived it, and was promptly beheaded for being a magician. That settled him. He didn't bother Nuremberg any more.

There are also displayed switches made of fine threads of steel, which were laid on the bare back with great effect. A little of these things goes a great way, but on being told that in the adjoining tower is the "steel maiden," you get over your qualmishness. Your party is taken in charge by a guide, who shows you a large assortment of horrors before you come to the chief one as a sort of preparation.

There are long tables with a screw at top and bottom, to which men were strapped by the hands and feet, the screws then turned till the unfortunate man was torn apart. In another room is a large iron cage. In those cheerful days, when a merchant, baker or butcher was found selling his goods by false weight or measure, he was placed in this cage and carried all through the city, with his name and trade fastened conspicuously in front.

Wife-beaters in those times were severely punished. They were furnished with close-fitting helmets, from which heavy weights were suspended. They were given a conspicuous place in the public square, appropriately labeled, and placed in stocks, with heavy weights attached to their arms and feet, and there they sat the livelong day, subjected to the jeers and ridicule of the town.

All this preparatory to the steel maiden, which is kept in a room above, precisely as she was in the days of her usefulness. You are shown what appears at first sight to be a rude statue of a woman clumsily hewn out of wood.

The guide noiselessly opened it, one door swinging to the right and the other to the left. The statue was hollow and just the size of the average man. Inside were straps by which the offender was bound so that he could not move a muscle. All the doors were lined with long, sharp steel spikes, strong and thick. When the victim was firmly secured the door on the left was slowly but firmly shut, and the long spikes went into his body, two being so arranged as to pierce his eyes. Then the door on the left was closed in a similar manner, and he would receive another complement of spikes, the closing of the doors being done very slowly, that the torture of the man in the embrace of the maiden might be prolonged as long as possible. The very last spike pierced his heart. After remaining shut up for a while, the straps were unloosened from the outside, a spring was touched, and the man fell fifteen feet into a cleverly constructed machine that ground him up as fine as mincemeat and dropped him into the river below, making food for fishes.

The Twenty-Dollar Plates

By DAVID P. BROWNE

PART III

CHAPTER SEVEN

HELION took a careful survey of the newcomer he took to be the "Big Bug," as he termed it. He was a tall, portly man, about fifty years of age. His sharp, ferret-like eyes bored one through and through, and in most cases compelled instant obedience. When he spoke he opened and closed his square jaw with a sort of metallic click, and the words were hurled forth in a cold, hard voice, like projectiles from a gun.

Such was the man who approached the press where Helion, in company with the other men, were standing. With a slight nod to each of them he advanced to Helion and held out his hand.

"Glad to meet you, Bull," he said in a voice he tried to make pleasant. There was no erasing that cold, suspicious inflection. "Davilia tells me you've been quite active around these parts, killing secret service men and all that, you know."

Helion looked at him without flinching.

"Yes," he said. "I've just completed a ten-dollar plate. We were turning out some bills from it when you entered. Here are some of them."

He displayed the fruits of his labor for the inspection of the chief.

"Marvelous! Marvelous!" was all he said, but his eyes gleamed with the satisfaction he felt. "Keep turning these out, men, for to-morrow is the day I intend to circulate a large amount of the queer, and then lay low for some time. If all goes well we can continue. If not——" He shrugged his shoulders.

"And now, Davilia, a word with you. I expect some friends here to-morrow night; some men who will remove the stuff. You'll see that they manage to get away safely?"

Davilia nodded.

"Of course they won't use the front entrance. And listen, Davilia. Be more careful than usual. The secret service are up to something. I don't know just what, but some drive is in the wind. That's why I want to get this stuff in circulation before it gets too dangerous to move."

Again the saloonkeeper nodded assent.

"I'd like to have one of your men watch that secret entrance when my men are in here loading up. You never can tell who'll be watching them, and we can't afford to take a single chance, however slim."

"Everything will be fixed to the queen's taste, Mr. Brooks," assured Davilia, mentioning his name for the first time. "Are you going now?"

"Yes, I have to leave, but I'll be back a few minutes before the men arrive. Don't fail me, Davilia, and you will be richer by a couple of thousand. So long."

He sauntered up the stairs and was gone.

Davilia turned to Helion.

"Bull," he said, "here's a great opportunity for you to get in thick with Brooks. "I'll give you the job of guarding that secret entrance until the men have left. Remember there is likely to be some ambitious detective prying around. If you see or hear anything suspicious, don't be afraid to use this, and make it count. You understand?" and he handed Bull a revolver.

"Perfectly."

"Well, you better get some sleep now, for the Lord knows you won't have much to-morrow night. Turn in. Me and the men will pack these bills."

Helion needed no second order to get to bed. Truth to tell, he was quite fatigued by the

day's labor, for the making of a plate such as is used by counterfeiters is a great strain on the mind as well as on the body.

The presses continued to grind out the green notes and, made drowsy by the hum of the motors, he soon fell into a deep sleep.

CHAPTER EIGHT

IT was half-past eight the next night. A slight drizzling rain was falling through a heavy impenetrable fog that cast a gray cloak over the city. Gliding through the dense vapor, the shadowy forms of six men hurried on. Behind them, with motor muffled, came a truck of high power. In the truck a few men could be seen seated on empty boxes, protecting themselves from the downpour by turning their coat collars over their necks.

Now and then one of the six walking men would turn and glance in the rear, as if to make sure the truck was right behind them, and having satisfied himself on this point, continued on.

Davilia was pacing up and down the spacious confines of the high-ceilinged cellar. Mr. Brooks, who had returned, bringing with him some new twenty-dollar plates, sat near one of the presses watching the clock eagerly.

"Bull" Helion was crouched near the secret entrance, an automatic in one hand and the other grasping the button that operated the door. He was a strange figure. His face was drawn, his hands shook, and his whole frame seemed to vibrate with some strange emotion. On his face, however, was written grim determination, a resolution to do a certain thing, come what might.

The truckmen were expected any minute. Davilia, always a trifle nervous on such occasions, paced up and down, biting at his fingernails.

Brooks, besides being eager, betrayed no other emotion. It was plain to see, however, that he was beginning to grow impatient. He would start at every strange sound, listen intently, as would the others, and then when nothing further developed would resume his former attitude of watchful waiting. Nearly a quarter of an hour elapsed with things this way, and at the end of that time Helion rushed silently back to inform them that a crowd of men were on their way to the house. The news acted upon all present like a tonic. Davilia rubbed his hands with glee, Brooks's eyes gleamed with a happy light, while the other three workers heaved long, deep sighs of relief.

"Thank God nothing happened!" ejaculated Davilia. "I was beginning to fear——"

"This is no time for idle speculation," interrupted Brooks. "Helion, get back to the door, and stand ready to let them in. Remember, make them give the password, and be sure no one is watching. If you suspect any one, why you know what to do."

Helion hurried back to the door, and through a tiny peep-hole observed the forms of a dozen men. Their leader, a tall powerful fellow, advanced to give the password. Helion operated the hidden switch, and the door swung slowly back. One after another twelve men filed past him, as silently as so many mice, and when the last had entered he glanced up the street. It was deserted. Quickly he closed the door and entered the pressroom. There a busy scene was being enacted. Package upon package of the bills were placed together to be carted away for circulation. Brooks directed all the movements, with Davilia watching closely.

"Go back and see if the coast is clear, Bull," ordered Brooks. "We'd better be carting this stuff away now. No use delaying needlessly."

Helion obeyed. As lightly as thistledown he felt his way through the hall to the door. His grasp on the revolver tightened. Through the peep-hole no one could be seen. He opened the door once more and glanced up the street. A peculiar whistle broke the stillness. Without hesitation Helion did his best to imitate it, but gained nothing for his efforts. He went back once more, this time leaving the door ajar.

Brooks was giving final instructions to the drivers. Davilia and the three pressmen were gathered around him listening intently.

"We will have no trouble disposing of this stuff," he was saying. "The thing is to get it away from here without notice. We'll take it out bit by it, and as the exit leads to a side

street, I don't suppose you'll experience any trouble."

"Wait!" It was Helion who spoke, and so deadly earnest were his tones that even Brooks hesitated.

"Before you remove any of that stuff, Mr. Brooks, I want to know if you brought those twenty-dollar plates with you?"

"Yes, but——"

"Let me see them!"

Brooks's jaws came together with a click.

"What's the meaning of this?" he asked. "What is it to you whether—— My God, man! Are you crazy?"

Helion's revolver was leveled at him, and the hand that held it was as firm as a rock.

"Brooks," he said sharply, "I'm not fooling. I'm no counterfeiter or murderer. I'm a Secret Service man—Harry Coleman by name—and I'm in deadly earnest. The place is surrounded. Escape is impossible. The first one to make a false move pays for it with his life. Remember that!"

He placed a police whistle to his lips and blew it twice. Twenty policemen, all armed with service revolvers, rushed into the room.

To say that these actions dumfounded the counterfeiters, and Brooks especially, would be to put it mildly. They were at a loss what to say or do. Before they had fully recovered from the shock, they were all handcuffed securely. Davilia was the first to find his voice.

"So," he said, "you took me in mighty slick, Coleman, posing as your own murderer. If I had suspected, you would not be alive to-day."

"Your candidness does you credit, Davilia," laughed the detective; "perhaps you will be equally candid when placed on trial for your life."

"For my life!" gasped Davilia. "What do you mean by that?"

"You haven't forgotten about the Harrigan case so quickly, have you?" quizzed Coleman. Davilia broke down completely and whimpered like a child.

Brooks maintained a brazen attitude, although it must have stung him bitterly to have been trapped so neatly. The others very wisely held their peace.

"Tell me this, Coleman," requested Brooks. "How did you learn to make such fine plates?"

The detective laughed heartily.

"You fell for it, didn't you!" he chuckled. "You see, Brooks, it wasn't queer at all. *It was genuine money, and the plate I pretended to engrave was one owned by the Government!*"

The capture so neatly effected was the most-talked-about topic for over a month. Davilia met his fate in the chair cringingly for the Harrigan murder. Brooks was sent away for twenty years, and the others were severely dealt with. The twenty-dollar plates which had for so long a time been in the possession of Brooks were brought to light and destroyed, as was the entire outfit of presses, etc.

Harry Coleman had made good his promise to Thornton. Just one month had elapsed since that stormy night when he visited the Secret Service official on a mission from headquarters. Just one month had elapsed since he promised to secure the twenty-dollar plates and bring the gang to justice. And he kept his word.

(*The End.*)

A NEW SERIAL

"WHEN HEARTS WERE TRUMPS"

By JOE BURKE

Begins in the Next Number

WATCH FOR IT!

The Green Hat

by

Hamilton Craigie

CHAPTER ONE

TUNISON, headquarters detective, had followed the slim, feminine figure in the shabby-genteel walking suit into and out of Gutelius's with the certainty that she was the woman he was after. Her face was familiar; he remembered having seen her in some show.

This certainty became assurance doubly sure following his hasty exit from the jewelry shop, for he had seen what no one else had seen: the slim, darting fingers palming a lavallière and the sauntering exit.

Now, at the corner of Broadway and Forty-second street, with his blunt fingers almost on her shoulder, the girl had made a little darting rush and the crowd had thrust between. Tunison, raging, had seen the slim figure a crossing's width away. In his headlong pursuit a majestic figure interposed a ham-like hand. Then there came the voice of the crossing's guardian, incisively ironic:

"Ea-sy does it now, me bucko. Do you want to get run over?"

Tunison had run foul of the traffic rule with a vengeance; the officer, no respecter of persons, had failed to recognize the plain-clothes man.

Tunison, wrenching free from that detaining grip, turned a furious red face upon the policeman.

"Confound it, man, let me go, will you?" he snarled, bolting across the congested street.

Followed by the patrolman's amazed, "Well, now, what do you know about that?" the detective had shouldered roughly into the press —too late. For that green toque was nowhere in evidence.

He halted, audibly profane; then, at arms' length almost, he saw a green toque, like a gage of battle, flaunting just ahead in the swirl and eddy of the hurrying crowd. In two strides he was beside her, had gripped the slim elbow, swung her sharp around with an abrupt

"Well, now, sister, guess we'll take a little walk!"

Then, as abruptly, he had dropped that elbow, for once at a loss, dumb before that outraged countenance gazing into his.

Green toque, slim, fashionable, shabby-genteel figure, swaying, lilting step—they were the same—and yet it was the face of another, eyes bleak, gaze icily contemptuous.

Mumbling an apology, the plain-clothes man went onward along the crowded street, inwardly berating the stupidity which had given his quarry those few seconds' start in a race which

was already lost. At any time back there in the jewelry shop, between the counter and the door, he could have snared this bird with the green plumage merely by stretching forth his hand.

And now she had slipped through his fingers, and the devil take the hindmost, the devil being the martinet at headquarters with the eye of ice and a tongue like a file's rasp. The captain might likely send him back to pavement-pounding, and that would have been the depths of misery for Tunison.

But even as he was beginning to despair again he saw it—green against an awning's dazzling whiteness in the declining sun—and this time there could be no mistake, for the face in profile was the face that he had seen back there in Gutelius's—the sharpened features, forward tilted, the lilting figure, like a bird on the wing, a falcon homing doubtless to its nest somewhere deep in that city jungle of forested roofs, gray now against the skyline.

Tunison, lunging forward along the pavement, straightened. But with his hand almost upon the swaying shoulder he paused. He was sure of her now; if he followed her he might learn something, perhaps uncover further evidence, earn the promotion which should have been his this long while, he told himself.

Find the woman, he had always said, and you find everything. There had been a regular epidemic lately of "hoisting," and most of it pointed to the same gang: one organized band, peregrines of plunder, foxes with but the one earth, as the detective was convinced.

The girl—for she was little more—had no suspicion that she was being followed, moving with a lithe, easy grace. And, if Tunison had noticed it, there was a poise, a carriage, that bespoke training, habit; for a shoplifter, a "hoister," a crook, and the companion of crooks it was a trifle uncommon.

But the plain-clothes man, his eyes upon that modish toque with its flaming feather, followed now, ten paces in the rear, as his quarry swung off abruptly from the avenue, turning into a side street toward the west.

It was a region of cheap boarding-houses and family hotels. Tunison knew it well enough. He quickened his pace a trifle as the girl, a half-block in the lead, halted a moment in the shadow of a tall building, hand upraised.

Tunison might not have caught that fleeting gesture if, at the moment, the street light just across had not blazed suddenly out of the gathering dark. And that gesture; he knew it well enough; it was unmistakable: the hand raised, palm outward, to the nostrils——

"A snowbird—a cokie?" muttered the detective, quickening his pace.

But even with the words the girl had vanished; he saw her for a moment in shadowy silhouette, mounting the high stone portico, her face a white, glimmering oval against the windy dark. Then she was gone into the shadows.

Tunison, coming along at a clumping run, went up the stone steps lightly for all his bulk. It was the usual "family" hotel, down at heel, frowsy; the elderly night man raised a shaking finger as the plain-clothes man entered without ceremony.

"Room, sir?" he inquired in a quavering falsetto.

But Tunison turned upon the man with a tight-lipped snarl:

"I'm lookin' f'r a jane in a green hat—see?" he grated, leaning over the desk in the process of flashing his badge. "Just blew in. Has she got a room here, old man?"

The night clerk fumbled a moment with his register, swung it around. Age and timidity might have been responsible for his haste, but Tunison, intent upon his question, missed the lightning down glance in the gray-green eyes, like the sun on water. He clared his throat, peering nearsightedly at the detective.

"If you mean Miss Marbridge, sir, I did not see her come in; she is occupying room —— Just a moment, sir. Ah, here it is. Room twenty-seven, sir, third floor rear. Shall I send up your name, mister?"

The plain-clothes man, fuming, eyed the clerk for a split-second with quick suspicion. Perhaps five minutes had elapsed from the moment of his entry, and the girl in the sea-green toque had proceeded him by a scant half-minute of time. Coming in, he remembered now he had heard the clang of the elevator door; she had been going up in that elevator even as he had been ascending the steps.

Now he swung toward the stairway, lighted

by a single incandescent; that stairway was dark and narrow, thick-piled with shadows. He wheeled abruptly, leveling a forefinger at the clerk.

"Never mind that telephone!" he said harshly. "I'm waiting—see?"

For the elevator was coming downward; even as he spoke the ground-glass partition sprang into light. Well, he was too old a bird to be caught climbing that winding stair while the fugitive made her get-away by means of the elevator.

And, after all, the girl must have known that she was followed; she probably had tipped off the clerk on her way in—that was it.

The door slid backward, with a thumping clatter, disclosing a woman, blonde, with the hallmark of the actress; she was stout and middle-aged; behind her a youngish man in a suit of inconspicuous pattern. In all Tunison counted five: a horsey individual in a staring check, a drab, elderly spinster, a stout man with a double chin.

They passed him close, but the girl was not among them. Tunison, frowning, surveyed them in a swift, biting appraisal; then, as the door swung shut, he interposed a foot.

"You stay here; get me?" he told the operator, a girl with hard eyes and a tight-lipped mouth. Then, going outward to the street, the detective sounded his whistle twice.

To the uniformed patrolman who responded Tunison gave curt instructions:

"You watch the elevator and the entrance, Clancy; I'm going up."

Mounting that darkened stair to the third floor, he found Number twenty-seven, but he did not knock. Instead, with a quick, silent pressure, he turned the knob; then, with his shoulder against the door, gave a quick heave, stumbled, recovered as the door swung open at his touch. The room was dark and silent.

Snapping on the light, he strode over to the closet; it, too, was empty. Baffled, he tried the windows, but they were fast. His quarry had vanished. But on the battered bureau-top he found the evidence, the proof that Room Twenty-seven had had a tenant, and but a matter of minutes before his entry. He sniffed, picking up the whitish powder between finger and thumb. It was dope!

But she was gone; she was nowhere in that room. Tunison, turning, strode out of that door and down the stair, a pulse in his temple beating with thick violence. Well, if the girl were not in that room, she must be somewhere in the house. Together he and the patrolman went over that hotel with the proverbial fine-tooth comb from cellar to garret. But the bird had flown. Finally, in a sullen acceptance of the facts, Tunison gave it up.

But it was an impassé, and a mystery.

The girl had undeniably entered that hotel; Tunison himself had seen her go up the steps. And from the moment of her entry nobody had left the building save under the gimlet scrutiny of the plain-clothes man's almost savage regard. The windows of Room Twenty-seven had been locked and bolted from within, but even from without there was no means of escape for anything less active than a squirrel, for instance. The fire-escape, in a palpable violation of the law, was no escape at all; from the third floor downward it hung, swaying from its rusted stanchions, a spidery ladder ending in air a good thirty feet from the dim courtyard below.

And above, upward to the roof, there was still less that offered for a get-away; the hotel stood alone, its nearest neighbor a good thirty feet away. And fronting Room Twenty-seven, across the black well of that plunging drop, there was the black facade of a warehouse, its iron-shuttered windows like blind eyes to the night.

It was a mystery.

Tunison was beaten. With or without wings, as it might chance, the bird had flown.

CHAPTER TWO

F GREGORY SOUTHWICK had not been a detective so very long, but he had his own ideas as to crime and criminals, and one of these, as it chanced, coincided with the dictum of Detective Tunison's, "Find the Woman!" But in the opinion of "Old Vinegar" Vaniman, chief of police of the thriving "city" of Arkadelphia, Southwick was just a "fresh city feller," who, besides parting his name in the middle, persisted in having ideas. "Notions," Vaniman called them.

"Haw-haw!" Vaniman roared as Southwick had leaned forward across the chief's desk in his earnestness. "Th very idee. Haw-haw!"

"Yes, chief, I think it is just that," the young man had answered him soberly. "Anyway, it's my theory. I think it can be made to fit the facts; and, anyway, I can't help *thinking* about it," he added, but with wasted sarcasm.

For the theft of the lavallière and a description of the thief had been broadcasted to every hole and corner. The jewel had been worth thirty thousand dollars, and there was a reward of five thousand posted for its recovery and the apprehension of the thief. For more than one excellent reason Southwick would be able to use that five "grand," and one of the reasons, as it chanced, was slim, and young and feminine.

For that particular reason, and for another, which dovetailed with it, Detective Southwick was sorry for the girl in the green toque. But duty was duty, and if he could find her the law must take its course. There was just a chance that she might be in his city.

The girl in the green toque had vanished from New York, leaving no clue; but there was a man, her lover and confederate doubtless, who had been traced from Chicago to Cleveland and thence to Omaha.

Southwick had had his idea, because, in the first place, he had remembered one salient fact; it dovetailed with another, and now, following his passage-at-arms with Vaniman, and acting on his theory, he had watched everywhere, but thus far to no purpose.

On a bright morning of late summer, while riding on the belt-line car going to the railroad station, newspaper headlines had caught his eye. His breath quickened as he read that a man had been seen in East St. Louis, the day previous answering the description of the thief's confederate. East St. Louis was but a matter of five miles' distance from Arkadelphia.

The street car had made the station stop; a number of passengers had boarded it. Southwick, as was his custom, appraised them as to their occupations from right to left; it was a game of which he never tired. It sharpened his powers of observation, he would have said, but Vaniman might have scoffed.

Now his gaze passed over the passengers in brief review: a portly man with a paunch; a sleepy-lidded exquisite in a hat of yellow velour, with clothes of metropolitan cut; a stout woman with a bundle; a slim girl, eyes heavy-lidded, wearing a smart green toque.

Southwick's sole indication of interest was a mere flicker of the eyelids, a tightening of the mouth.

The car was slowing at a busy corner. Southwick, with a lightning movement, was on his feet, as the girl in the green hat arose, swaying unsteadily, as with a groaning of brakes the car slid slowly to a protesting halt.

The detective put forth a hand, lurched, recovered as the girl, passing him with a lithe, sinuous grace, had leaped from the platform. A moment the green toque glinted in the sun; then it was gone.

But Southwick, turning sharply, gripped the elbow of the young exquisite in the yellow hat.

"I want you!" he said, fingers like hooks of steel sliding downward to the slim wrist.

In a way it had been a chance shot, and yet not altogether that, but it had told. For in the flash of time before the stopping of that car the detective had put two and two together and found them—one. The figure in the yellow hat had been carrying a bag, a small one. It was like a physician's handbag. He had raised it, lowered it, and in that flash of time he had been betrayed!

Now the prisoner appeared to shrink; then he straightened, lifting his dull eyes, haunted eyes they were, to his captor.

"Well, you've got me," he said heavily. "And I'm glad!"

CHAPTER THREE

CHIEF OF POLICE VANIMAN stared, then stared again, thumbing at his goatish tuft of chin whisker, lips drawn downward at the corners.

"Well, you've done it, young feller," he conceded grudgingly. "But I don't see exactly how."

F. Gregory Southwick spoke modestly in answer, and there was no exultation in his tone:

"You see, chief, as I said, it was a case of

'Find the woman,' and I remembered one thing, one fact. You recall the disappearance of Venetia, 'The Mystery Woman,' as she was called? It was a sort of nine days' wonder at the time, you remember. Well, in a way, it's a rather exceptional story, if an old one. A clever actress—the cleverest in her line—success, and then the high spots, and a career ruined at its height. You know that there never has been a male impersonator to equal her! Her description fitted the thief. I guess she'd gone down pretty far to steal, but then, of course, dope would be responsible for that."

He paused, while Vaniman was silent, listening.

"I think it was clear enough; she was accustomed to lightning changes; that was a feature of her act. She knew that she had been followed from the jewelry shop, and she had over five minutes, ample time for her. But it was a boy apparently who went down in the elevator and out, right under the nose of that New York detective. He never suspected, and so Venetia got away."

"Well, but the confederate," interrupted Vaniman.

"Yes, of course," continued Southwick. "That was what gave me the idea. You see, she disappeared. without leaving a trace, following her entry to the hotel, and, of course, there never was any confederate. It was—*herself!*"

"By gravy, young man, that's a fact, but there's still one other thing: how could you tell that he was—well, that *he* was a woman?"

Southwick smiled.

"Observation, plus deduction, I suppose you'd call it, chief," he said. "You see, she was clever, but she overlooked one thing. Just before the car stopped she'd been carrying a small bag; she lifted it, put it down then, the same as anybody would have done, man or woman. But it fell right through between her knees, because it was the one thing she had forgotten, and the one evidence that she was a woman! She'd forgotten that——"

"——She was minus a lap!" finished Vaniman for him with an admiring grin.

FAMOUS HEALING SHRINE

THE famous healing shrine of North America, the shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe, near Mexico City, was overtaken by disaster recently. Mexican radicals placed bombs under the celebrated chapel and wrecked it, but the statue to which divine powers are attributed was unscathed. This shrine, too, has had a most interesting history. It was established in 1531.

The legend is as follows: Juan Diego, a poor Indian, was wandering in the mountains when suddenly the Virgin appeared in his path and ordered him to return to Mexico City for an audience with the Spanish ruler of the province. She told the Indian that he must ask the ruler to build a church on the spot where they then stood. Bewildered, he told her that he was only a poor Indian and would not be able to even get within sight of the ruler, who was a great man with little time and no inclination to see such an insignificant person as Juan Diego. For answer the Virgin took a small blanket worn by the Indian, filled it with roses which she gathered from bramble bushes and told him to take this and show it to the ruler, who would be convinced, in consideration of the fact that roses were out of season, that he had really seen the Virgin.

Showing the roses as his proof, Juan Diego finally was admitted to the palace. He told the ruler of his extraordinary experience. His story was doubted, and the Indian prepared to show his proof. He opened his blanket to show the roses; they had disappeared, and in their stead there was a picture of the Virgin woven into the cloth of the blanket. The evident miracle instantly convinced the ruler, and he constructed the church which now stands on the spot pointed out by Juan Diego—a church somewhat wrecked but retaining nevertheless its marvelous curative powers.

Except for one other, these two shrines are the most famous in the world. This one is the shrine of the Grotto of Lourdes, in the Pyrenees of France, not far from the Spanish border.

Former Invasions of Egypt

SINCE the days when Cambyses, son of Cyrus, king of the Medes, led his horde of Persians and Phoenicians against the last of the pharaohs and reduced him to the position of a Persian satrap, Egypt has been subject to alien sovereigns, and the prize of contending nations. No expedition against Egypt before the days of Napoleon was successful that was made from the sea only. Cambyses, Artaxerxes, Alexander, Amrou, all marched overland from the east and were successful. The Athenians and Greeks attacking from the mouth of the Nile were always unsuccessful. Even Caesar was powerless so long as he remained in Alexandria, and had to be relieved by a motley host of Syrians, Bedouins and Jews, marching upon Memphis.

The first invasion of which we have exact details, and the most successful with the least materials, was that of Amrou, general of the Caliph Omar, in the year 639 A. D., which won Egypt from the Greek empire for the Mohammedans. Amrou entered Egypt from Syria, in the month of December, with 4,000 men. The reduction of Pelusium, the frontier fortress, close to the present Port Said, took him a month. He then marched straight upon Memphis, but was kept for seven months before Babylon, near the modern Cairo, notwithstanding that the nation rose in his favor, detesting its Greek rulers. But when at length in August, partly through treachery, Babylon surrendered, the country was practically won. The fact, however, that the Greeks, though defeated in a pitched battle, after twenty days' fighting made good their retreat to Alexandria, shows how the loss of time until the rising of the Nile had begun was hostile to the invader.

Alexandria itself, attacked from land only, held out for fourteen months, and the garrison only in December, 641, finally abandoned Egypt to the Mohammedans. Many efforts for its recovery by Christians were made, the most strenuous being that under Louis IX., in 1250. He arrived at Damietta on June 5th, with 700 knights out of 2,000, with whom he had started from Cyprus, representing probably a force of some 7,000 men. The next day he defeated the Saracens and took possession of the town. Here he wasted his time till the 6th of December, when he advanced to Mansouralli, where he stayed two months more. On the 6th of February he attacked the enemy, now strongly reinforced, was hopelessly defeated, and taken prisoner with his whole army, being only ransomed by the surrender of Alexandria and the total evacuation of Egypt.

Far different was the action of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1798. He reached Alexandria with some 30,000 men on the 1st of July. Next day he was in possession of the town. On the 13th he fought a bloody battle at Ramanier with the Mameluks. On the 21st he became master of the country by the total defeat of Murad Bey, with 6,000 horsemen and 20,000 foot, in the battle of the Pyramids. On the 23d he entered Cairo.

When Nelson arrived on August 1 at Alexandria, notwithstanding his total destruction of the French fleet in Aboukir Bay, he could not shake the position of Napoleon, now firmly planted in possession of the country.

A year afterwards, notwithstanding his loss at Acre, on the 11th of July Napoleon totally defeated the Turks at Aboukir. Repeated English bombardments of Alexandria had no effect, and the year 1801 saw the French still firmly established in the country. On the 2d of March of that year Abercrombie, with 17,000 men, cast anchor in Aboukir Bay. On the 8th he effected a landing. On the 21st he won the battle of Alexandria against 27,000 French and lost his own life. Rosetta was taken, but the British troops hesitated to advance for two months.

At length, in May, when some paltry reinforcements had arrived, they moved onward and again defeated the enemy, and took Ramanieh on the 7th, and Cairo capitulated on

the 20th. Meanwhile General Baird had started from Bombay in the end of December, 1800; but owing to the monsoon being against him, only arrived at Kossir, on the coast of upper Egypt, on the 8th of June. Then his advance was as speedy as effective. In nine days, with a force of 6,400 British and native troops, he traversed 140 miles of desert to the Nile, and reached Cairo on August 10th, with hardly any loss. The united force then marched down on Alexandria, and on August 31st Menou capitulated and the whole French army evacuated Egypt. But it was then discovered that had the English advanced on the day after the battle of Alexandria the same result would have been obtained three months earlier.

The next British expedition to Egypt was less successful. In 1807 the Turks had been persuaded by the French to declare war. In March a force of 5,000 men was dispatched under General Fraiser to Egypt. They arrived off Alexandria on the 15th, landed on the 18th, and took it on the 21st. On the 22d a pointless and fruitless attempt with a small force was made on Rosetta. Next month no advance having been made, the attempt was renewed. General Stewart besieged Rosetta for thirteen days, and on April 22d he fought his way back to Alexandria with a loss of 1,000 out of 2,500. On September 22d Alexandria was surrendered to the Turks and Egypt evacuated.

As on this occasion the Mamelukes and the country were in our favor, the disastrous failure can be attributed to the want of vigor in the attack. Indeed, the same lesson is to be learned from every invasion of Egypt. A force which does not advance from the coast at once upon the key of Egypt, Cairo, whether from the east by the desert road, or up the Nile before its rising, is predestined to failure. Once entangled in the delta, and its network of streams, the invader is helpless.

AN ALASKA FOX FARM

ARRIVING at Seattle recently with $60,000 worth of fox pelts, Z. T. Halferty, the original fur farmer, bought a moving picture theatre and bid farewell forever to the lonesome life of the far Northwest. The story of the first fox ranch is romantic. Two men, a miner without a mine and a sailor without a ship, landed some years ago on the Island of Ugah, near Kodiak, off the coast of Alaska. They bought the island and started silver fox farming by installing three pairs of silver foxes among the rocks, content to leave the rest to nature.

They succeeded, or rather the foxes succeeded, and now the men have 600 pairs roaming their domain. The junior partner is Gus Olsen. Halferty went to Alaska in 1897 and after experiencing various shades of fortune decided upon fox raising for the valued pelts. Olsen arrived at Ugah in 1899 on a bit of driftwood following a shipwreck.

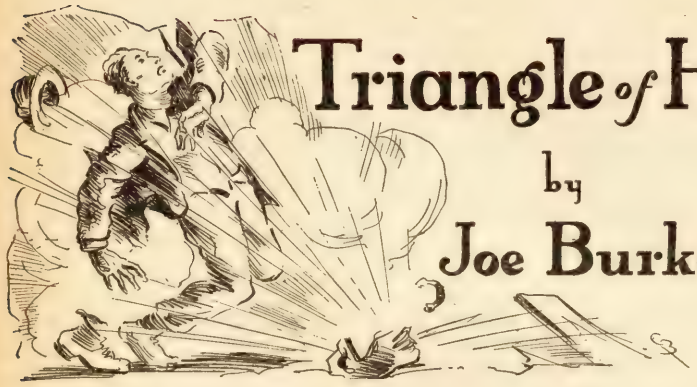
The two bought the island, consisting of about 50,000 acres, seven years ago from the Government.

For ten months each year Olsen is the only inhabitant on this land, but it is a life he loves. The main trouble in fox farming is the fight to keep off eagles. They swoop down and carry away the fox pups when they are too young and small to protect themselves. Olsen devotes most of his time in spring killing eagles. This summer he shipped to Juneau 95 pairs of eagles' claws to claim the bounty of fifty cents a pair. Much time is spent in patroling the shore line against native hunters who attempt to land and trap the animals on the farm.

These animals are never domesticated, but wander over the island at will and must be trapped just as though they didn't live on a farm.

Native trappers are hired during the winter and paid $50 a month and $5 a pelt bonus in addition to board. The men have not been compelled to feed the foxes, as the island is well stocked with game and fish drift to shore with cross currents. When a large whale goes ashore it provides food for the foxes for at least six months.

Silver foxes are worth from $20 to $500 each.



Triangle of Hate

by

Joe Burke

CHAPTER ONE

THERE came the roar of a thirty-eight gun as it spewed lead and fire, its flashes stabbing the dim light of the early morn. Zigagging, bending low, as his lithe body and fleet legs were maneuvering to get out of the line of fire of the officer's gun, a fugitive reached the mouth of an ally. There was another shot as he was turning into the broad avenue where spacious private estates were numerous. Their trees and shrubbery would afford him a temporary haven. The bullet perforated his coat-sleeve, searing the flesh. With an oath he stopped, straightened up, and whirled with eyes ablaze and an automatic in his hand.

"Blast you!" he roared. "You're speaking too loud with that smoke-wagon of yours." He pulled the trigger.

With the stinging bark of the gunman's firearm the pursuing policeman did the only available thing—jumped for cover, letting go another shot as he did so. Peering from the corner of his improvised shield—an empty packing-case—he uttered a grim ejaculation as he stood erect.

"Got yer that time, didn't I? Stand where you are, or I'll plug yer good and plenty next time!" With revolver raised he moved gingerly towards the crook, as if expecting treachery.

Apparently the officer's last bullet had found its mark. The gunman, half turned by the shock, stood swaying in bewilderment. His hand was clawing at his breast, tearing open his shirt. For a second everything was blurred before his sight. He felt a beating in his throat and a drumming in his ears. A rush of blood from his punctured lung gurgled a tiny stream of crimson to his lips. Through the haze of his filmy eyes and the star-lit advance of dawn he could see the arm of the law approaching warily.

A queer thing happened after that fleeting second. It was one of those odd coincidences, contradictory and unnatural, which are not apt to crop up at a time like that. His vision cleared, his body grew erect and tense. His limp arm hanging at his side grasping the automatic raised elastically. The gun spit shot after shot at the policeman until the magazine was empty. He then sped off, and was soon swallowed up in the darkness.

At the first crash of the gun the officer, who was within five yards of the fugitive and was about to rush him, dropped to the ground and lay still. The bullets flew harmlessly over his prone body. At the sound of the retreating footsteps he sprang to his feet, blew his

whistle, and rushed in the direction the gunman had taken. He was nowhere in sight. Patrolmen from the neighboring beats quickly responded to the call for aid. A diligent search in the vicinity was unavailing. A dragnet was thrown out by the police, and doctors, hospitals, and other institutions that succor the sick and injured were ordered to be on the lookout for him should he seek their aid.

Leaving the reserves to continue their quest for the gunman, Nick Flynn, the officer whom the fugitive had eluded, slowly went back to the exclusive Beaumont hotel. There he resumed his duty. An hour later while he was patroling his beat the cry of "Help! Thieves! Robbers!" coming from a window facing on the narrow ally at the rear of the hotel caused him to pause and draw his revolver. Looking up, he saw a gliding, crouching silhouette working its way along a narrow cornice, swinging ape-like to a fire-escape ladder and scurrying down nimbly to the ground.

A pop-eyed Ethiopian, embellished with livery plentifully decorated with gold-colored braid and shiny buttons, whisked Flynn up in an elevator to the eighth floor.

"Five doors to the left, sar," he directed. "Room 89."

Flynn grunted his thanks as he stepped out of the lift.

At room 89 he halted. Behind the closed door a humming of hushed conversation could be heard. He knocked sharply and waited. Getting no response in what he deemed ample time, he turned the knob and entered the room. It was a gorgeously furnished boudoir. Scantily clad in sleeping lingerie were gathered a dozen females, chattering like a flock of magpies. Inert on a four-posted canopied bed, a mere slip of a maid dutifully administering smelling-salts, lay a portly woman of uncertain age, a disheveled robe of hand-embroidered China silk clinging to her shapely body. The house detective, his brown derby hat tilted at a rakish angle on his head, was talking to the woman. The odor of costly French perfumery filled the room.

"Hello, Flynn!" greeted the hotel dick. "He beat you to it, eh? Did ya plug him?"

Officer Flynn's gray eyes were cold as he gave the egotistical one the up and down.

"Yes," he responded slowly, "he did beat me to it—this morning. What of it?" He furnished no information to the last question. Flynn then turned his back on him and addressed the feminine assembly.

"I am here in discharge of my duty. If you ladies that don't belong here will take your leave and finish your beauty sleep, I will be able to learn what has been going on in this room. Whose apartment is this, and who is that fainting woman?"

A chorus of gasps and looks of amazement greeted his query.

"You—don't—know?" incredibly piped a pursy matron attired in a creation of pink silk and lace.

"If I did, do you think I'd be asking you?" snapped the officer.

"That is Madame Carleeto," from another as they filed from the room.

So this was Madame Carleeto? Carleeto, the magnificent, the enchantress of the Metropolitan, idolized by London, Paris, New York, and in fact all the world. Her divine voice once heard was never forgotten. But that revelation didn't upset Nick Flynn's common sense. He closed the door and stepped to the side of the bed.

"What's the story on this, madame?" he began.

The diva eyed him for a second under half-closed lids, then struggled to a sitting position, assisted by her maid.

"You see," she drawled in a rich soprano voice, "I had dismissed my maid for the night; I intended to prepare myself when I was ready to retire. I was reclining on the bed in my lounging gown reading. I fell asleep. *Mon Dieu!* It was—what you say in your American slang—fierce."

The policeman smiled, nodding encouragingly.

"Go on, please."

"I was awakened by the sound of something crashing on the floor—my hand-mirror. A man stood at the foot of the bed confronting me. 'Don't make an outcry, lady,' he commanded softly, pointing a revolver at me. I screamed. He cursed me, then sprang through the open window."

Nick Flynn was taking mental notes of her story.

"Anything missing?"

"Oh, *sacre*, yes!" she cried, gesticulating wildly. "My diamonds! They're gone!"

"Their value?" Taking a notebook and pencil from his pocket, the officer waited.

"Fifty thousand dollars," volunteered the maid.

"Yes, Marie," verified the madame. "That is their value."

"Phew!" ejaculated Flynn as he arose to his feet. "Can you give me an idea of what that prowler looked like? I exchanged shots with him, but I wasn't near enough to get a good look at the guy."

Madame sighed wearily.

"To think," she fretted. "Me, the great Madame Carleeto! Me, who have made thousands, yes, millions, laugh and cry with my wonderful singing, that I am obliged to endure such indignities!"

"There's no doubt about that, madame," sympathized the policeman, "but please answer my question."

"Oh, yes," apologized madame. "Excuse, please. He was tall, thin—very, very thin—good clothes—very, very good—and such a dark face; not like a negro. Like ze Indian."

"The Breed," soliloquized Flynn. "Sure as I'm a foot high."

"Some cheap second-story worker," voiced the house detective, breaking silence from the background.

As he scribbled in his notebook, without looking up, Flynn drawled with caustic irony:

"Guess you're right, chief, but this time he went six over his count." He tucked his book in his pocket and looked up at the prima donna.

"I will report all the facts to my superior, madame, and we will leave no stone unturned to recover your property. Good-morning."

"*Grand merci mon ami*," she smiled as Flynn was opening the door. "Your reward will be great—five thousand dollars."

CHAPTER TWO

FLYNN lost no time in making a full report to his captain.

"I'd like if you'd assign me to this case, captain," pleaded the officer. "You know I've done plain-clothes work before to your satisfaction."

Captain Stillman looked up from his desk.

"Why this case, Flynn?"

"For two reasons, captain," he replied respectfully. "First, personal; he tried to make a widow out of my wife and leave my little ones fatherless. Second, seeing that he didn't succeed, that little matter of the five thousand dollars' reward will buy my little family a home."

The precinct head gazed steadily into the eager face of his subordinate. What he saw in those luminous gray eyes prompted him to a quick decision.

"Go to it, Flynn, the case is yours. And remember, you've got the backing of the whole department behind you. Bring him in. Of course, if that is impossible, you know this county has a beautiful morgue. Good luck to you."

The policeman thanked him, saluted and hurried from the office.

Several hours later, when the busy throng of the big city were scurrying to and fro, a swarthy young man dressed in the height of fashion and carrying a small leather bag, such as professional men use, walked slowly along the Bowery.

His large eyes were glowing with a feverish light. Under his brownish tan a close observer would note a sickly, yellowish hue. His step was weary, even lagging.

As he approached an intersected street he glanced toward the opposite side. On the ground floor of a badly careening rookery was a dingy little tobacco store. Flaring posters displaying pictures heralding a coming burlesque show were pasted on the dirty window. Framed in the doorway was a squat beetle-browed foreigner of the Bolsheviki type.

As the man with the bag stepped heavily over the curb a bulky, red-faced individual wearing a derby hat, square-toed shoes, and all the other ear-marks of a city "bull" plastered all over him, turned the corner.

The swarthy one retraced his steps, gained the sidewalk, and hurried along towards the north.

He smothered a groan that arose to his lips at every step he took until he reached a dingy saloon, where he turned in. Sinking into a

chair at a sticky, liquor-stained table, through narrowed lids he scrutinized the habitués.

His eyes blazed when his glance rested on an undersized, rat-like individual lounging at the bar. Jabel Nieder—sobriquet, the Snake—was the object of the new arrival's attention. Beckoning to a waiter, he slipped him a coin and pointed to the Snake.

"Tell that guy I want to see him."

A look of surprise, quickly supplanted by one of fear, overshadowed the rodent visage of Nieder. He walked reluctantly to the table and, frowning, stood, one hand buried significantly in his pocket, tense and expectant.

"Whatcha want of me?" he asked sourly, his ratty eyes twinkling viciously.

"Sit down and have a drink. I guess we can get something with a kick in it in this joint."

The dark man's white teeth gleamed as he bared them in an amiable smile that put the Snake at his ease. Nieder grunted and slumped into a chair, confronting his host.

"Where you been, Breed, since you got out of Sing Sing? What's the matter wid yer—soused?" He noted the weakness and swaying body of the Breed for the first time.

The Breed, entered on the books at police headquarters as Thomas Lightfoot, was really a half-breed Indian. His father was a full-blooded Piute. Educated in the schools of California, a promising scholar and an all-around athlete, an honorable future was beckoning to him. It's strange what little things change one's whole career. One wedge displaced, or even the slight motion of some stray molecule, and the wheels begin to turn the wrong way. It was only a few years back since the Breed, with the scanty allowance allotted by his father, longed to join the nightly orgies of his fellow students, and perpetrated his first theft. That was the beginning of it, and there lay the underlying motive of his entry into the underworld of the big city.

He soon won a place among the elite of that sect. He was daring in his exploits, a courage that the dope-primed Neider had envied. The Snake hated Lightfoot.

Then came the girl into their circle. She had also slipped from the pedestal of respectability. Neider laid siege to her heart. So also did the Strangler, an ex-pug known as a strong-arm garroter and taxi bandit. Henrietta Morris had no eyes for them. The Breed was her inspiration, her god, her all. And strange to say, although the goddess of love is indiscriminative, her idolatry was reciprocated.

"Me for you, kid, you for me," she would laugh, her ardent eyes dancing.

He would take her head between his hands and kiss her fervently. "Righto, pal of mine, righto."

The other two vanquished crooks—one too much of a coward to openly declare war on the victor, the other too busy plying his trade—gritted their teeth and waited, hoping for revenge.

The Breed's short era of bliss was rudely jarred by a venerable judge intonating from the bench that one Thomas Lightfoot must give his "pound of flesh" to the commonwealth, etc., for three years as punishment for the crime of breaking and entering.

That was over three years ago. Now he was back to his old haunt—Dutch Slade's saloon—smiling across the table at the Snake, who was chafing under a guilty presagement.

"Nix on the stew stuff, Snake; I'm here because I'm here, and then some. Let's go into the back room. There's a window there, and it smells like a sewer here."

In the back room, the window raised, letting in the air, the Snake was curiously attentive, the Breed communicative.

"Is Faro Charlie's hide-out still standing out in Flushing?" asked the Breed, turning from the open window, somewhat refreshed and dropping into a chair facing Nieder across a table.

The Snake eyed him narrowly, his gaze switching to the leather bag that rested on the table.

"Yes. Why? Been putting one over?" he questioned.

"Yes, and shot it out with a flatfoot."

"He got you. Did ya croak him?" The Snake's voice sunk to a whisper as he oscillated his ratty eyes between the door and window.

"No, I guess not, unless it was his ghost that I saw rounding the corner at Deliski's.

He chuckled softly as he watched his companion's perturbation.

"Who was it?" he asked impatiently, arising from the chair.

"Sit down," ordered the Breed. "Don't let a joke like Flynn stampede you."

"Joke nothing!" stormed the Snake, pounding the table. "That Harp 'll hang on like a bill collector."

"Sit down," Lightfoot repeated. "He won't come looking for me here. He'll hang around the I. W. W.'s place for a while, no doubt."

"What ya got?" Neider asked as he perched himself on the edge of the chair, his eyes glued on the closed door.

"Enough to split three ways, and plenty for each," avowed Lightfoot. "Cast your optics on those."

He opened the leather bag, disclosing the plunder in all its sparkling brilliancy.

The Snake's ratty eyes almost popped from their sockets. His breath was sucking in and out with quick, jerky gasps. His fingers, as he crouched with tensity over the open bag, were spasmodically clawing.

"Diamonds!" he gasped hoarsely. "Gee, what a haul!"

The Breed, who had been looking at him malignantly, drew the bag towards him, closed it and set it on his lap.

"Has the Strangler got that tin lizzy of his yet? If he has, get him. As I said before, there's enough to go all around. Think so?"

Neider eyed him narrowly. His sluggish brain was busy devising a plan—a plan conformable to his cowardly nature.

"Won't any other buzz driver do?" he ventured guardedly.

"No. Get the Strangler, or we quit here. You always was a dumbbell, Snake. There'd be a flock of bulls on top of us before dark. The Strangler is in on this, and that goes. I can't say that I've got any brotherly love for that big stiff, but he's the guy that's got to drive me out. He ain't got any scruples about taking a divvy for the trip, so if you want a split of them sparklers, dig him up. You can get Doc Carver after you land me there. He's just been turned loose from a two-year stretch. A sawbuck note will gag him. What's the answer?"

"Oh, all right. Just as ya say. Only I wouldn't put the Strangler wise to the stones till we hit there; you know his game, and that's a lonely road on the way out to Faro's dump." He paused to let his innuendoes sink in, then added: "If he took it into his head to hog it all we wouldn't last as long as a short drink, even with gats."

"All right," assented the Breed impatiently, "but make it snappy. I've got to get patched up, and that d——m soon."

CHAPTER THREE

THE Snake had been watching the glassy eyes and fluctuating body of the wounded crook.

"This guy's headed for the cemetery, judging by the looks of him. I'll be the doctor, or the undertaker," he thought, starting for the door. There he turned and counseled with affiliable authority. "If any of those bums outside horn in while I'm gone, shoo them out. Tell them you're sick, got a hang-over. You an' I are gona bury th' hatchet an' be pals; ain't we?"

Without waiting for an answer, he opened the door and was gone.

"The low-down skunk! The sneaking coyote!" hissed the Breed venomously, his face distorted with fruy. "Yes, oh, yes, we'll be pals, like thunder!" With trembling fingers he took from his coat pocket a tiny vial of liquid. From another pocket he brought forth a short, tapering stiletto, its needle point thrust into a cork. Giving a hurried look towards the door, he carefully uncorked the vial, slipped the stopple from the dagger and dipped it into the liquid. Withdrawing it at once, he fanned it slowly until it was dry, and then stuck it into the stopple again, then back to the pocket. Arising with painful difficulty, he staggered to the open window and poured the contents of the bottle on the ground without, casting it when empty amidst the weeds.

For several minutes he stood gazing across the spacious lot. His mental faculties, turbulent and stubborn, incensed by his excruciating pain were working on an intricate problem. His eyes strayed from the scrubby field to the bag on the table, then slowly around the room, taking in every detail with his sweeping glance.

A grin of disappointment followed his survey.

"Not even a rat-hole," he frowned as he turned towards the open window again.

In the midst of his perplexed cogitation the squabbling of a crowd of urchins wrangling over a decision, while engaged in our national game, pierced a rift through his fog-bound mentality.

"I'll do it," he muttered grimly. "He's on the level, even if he is a bug. An' maybe," he smiled wearily, "it'll help some in my favor when I pass on." He pressed a push-button on the wall, and then seated himself at the table. The bag rested on his knees, out of view.

After what seemed hours to the Breed, the door was flung open and the thick-necked, bullet-headed waiter framed himself in the doorway.

"Whatcha want?" he growled, scowling at Lightfoot, who sat with his elbows resting on the table, his fingers twisting a crisp five-dollar bill.

"You," voiced the Breed shortly. "Come in and close the door."

The magnetic lure of United States currency accelerated the surly short-change "artist," who did his bidding and stood confronting him at attention.

"This is yours," the Breed announced simply, fingering the V-spot and looking up into his greedy eyes. "I'll leave another one on the table when I go. Now listen: Get me a sheet of paper and an envelope. I don't care what kind of paper you get, so long as I can write on it. But the envelope—that must have plenty of stickum on it or it won't do. Do you get me? Well, then, go to it, and if you've got a good strong yard of string, fetch that along."

"I got yer," obeyed the waiter, and his locomotive agility stimulated by the promised tip, he hurried from the room.

"Another rat," opinioned the Breed.

In a few minutes the waiter returned with the required commodities and placed them on the table. Lightfoot then handed him the tip.

"Close the door as you go out," hinted the Breed testily, as he smoothed out the paper and began to write. "And say," he cautioned, "mum's the high sign when the Snake shows up or——" He patted his pocket.

"I'm on," the waiter winked owlishly as he took his leave.

For the next five minutes the Breed wrote feverishly. Cold beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead, his hands trembled as he licked the flap of the envelope. Then carefully sealing it, he laid it aside. He then, with a length of stout twine, secured the bag by winding it several times around the middle, making it fast with a few taut knots, thus changing its appearance.

With a long-drawn-out sigh he arose, bag and letter in hand, and again stood before the open window. The juvenile scrub teams were still struggling for conquest. A crop-haired urchin, holding down the position at right field, a few yards from the building, was quickly singled out by Lightfoot. Placing two fingers in his mouth, and with all the respiration that he could produce from a bullet-torn lung, he blew a sharp whistle.

"Come over here," he called, and beckoned with his finger as the lad turned at the shrill sound.

The embryo Babe Ruth walked to the window and stood blinking up at the Breed.

"Wasamatter?" he piped. "Whatcha want?"

Lightfoot held the letter before his face.

"Can you read? If so, know where that is?"

The kid spelled out the address aloud.

"Sure," he answered proudly. "Dat's only two blocks down," indicating south with his head.

"Fine," commended Lightfoot. "Wanta earn four bits?"

"Do I what?" gasped the scrub team right-fielder. "I'd——"

"All right, listen," interrupted the Breed, holding the bag up before him. "Take this over there with the letter. Understand, do you? Well, do as I say, and wait until he gives you the bag back. Don't give it to any one else. Make it fast, kid, and here is the half a buck. There's another quarter waiting; go to it," he finished, then watched the messenger as he dashed around the corner and out of sight.

In less than fifteen minutes the youthful courier returned with the bag, received his promised remuneration and departed. The

Breed hefted the bag in his hand as he sank into a chair. A satanical look was in his eyes as the Snake opened the door and glided into the room.

Lightfoot had not lied to the Snake when he told him that he had seen Nick Flynn—or his apparition—hanging around Deliski's store.

Ward Detective Flynn lost no time after leaving his superior's sanctum in going home, shedding his uniform and getting into his civies. Deliski, a fanatic socialist, suspected—but never proven—by the police of being the perpetrator of many labor outrages, was known by Flynn to have befriended the Breed in the past. Although the policeman was not in the same class in regard to deductions as the spiritualist creator of Sherlock Holmes, his first thought was of Deliski. Flynn gave him a mild grilling and received many evasive answers amidst shrugging of shoulders and flourishing gesticulations. Flynn finally concluded that Deliski was either telling the truth or he would be a good find for the movie syndicate. But he had a "hunch" that he was on the right trail. He was a policeman first, last, but not only. He was a father, a husband and a home seeker. Therefore, his duty was to find his man and recover the diamonds. That would be his loyalty to his oath. Then to punish, through legal means, his would-be assassin. So his "hunch" stayed his steps. He stuck around.

A minor automobile accident diverted his attention from the point of his surveillance. When, after a few minutes, he returned to resume his post he uttered an ejaculation and strode quickly towards the tobacco shop.

CHAPTER FOUR

"GOT 'im," the Snake announced as he stood before the Breed. "He's outside now. Come on."

The Strangler greeted Lightfoot with a growling pretense of friendship, his eyes focused on the bag. Despite the fact that he was not to be apprised of the loot until later, his rapacious glance had betrayed him.

"You won't forget the doctor, will you?" reminded Lightfoot, addressing the Snake, who was seated beside him, as they bumped along the road.

"Naw," he lied. "I went ya one better. I phoned the doc, and he said he'd get there soon."

Faro Charlie's hide-out and abandoned gambling house was situated well back on a thickly wooded lot at the end of a blind path, one of the branches of three crossroads a few miles from the city. Faro, compelled to retreat from his disreputable domicile by the activity of the State police, was now on the high seas, leaving the place at the mercy of any one seeking cover.

"Here we are," announced Nieder, as the car turned in through a jungle of brush and rank weeds and pulled up to the door of the house.

The Breed climbed out with some difficulty, brushing aside the Snake's proffered hand.

"I'll be back in a jiffy," Nieder flung over his shoulder at the chauffeur as he trooped up the steps after Lightfoot; a knowing wink followed the utterance. "I'm just gona fix dis poor guy comfy, an' den we'll chase down th' road a bit an' see if we can hurry up old sawbones."

The Snake opened the front door with his deft fingers, aided by a button-hook inserted into the rusty lock. The hallway that they entered reeked with the stench of dampness and mildew. Cobwebs, dust-laden, swayed sluggishly from the ceiling, and the scurrying of rats was heard.

Up a staircase, the treads creaking and groaning under every step, they mounted to the floor above. Two rooms, with their doors ajar, scantily furnished, and the squalidness exposed by tiny shafts of sunlight shooting through the broken shutters, were the repelling accommodations.

"Some place, this," jested the Snake in a strained voice. "But don't worry, pal, I'll have you fixed up O. K. in jig time. Let's go into this room," he suggested eagerly as he guided Lightfoot to the back room. The other room looked out on the front. The Strangler and his taxi were out there.

A brass bed, tarnished and green, two chairs and an old-fashioned dresser were the fittings that set on a bare and dusty floor.

Lightfoot was now leaning heavily on the Snake as he led him towards the bed. The gleam in the Snake's ratty eyes brooded evil for the stricken crook.

"Pile in there, pal," pleaded Nieder. "You'll be all to the good in a few days. Bank on me; I'll see yer through."

His high-pitched voice was strained and unnatural. His thin, pointed face was chalky. He was breathing hard, as if undergoing some physical exertion. His pin-point eyes were reptilian.

The hour of his triumph was at hand, gloated the Snake. Fate and a policeman's bullet had thrown the man he hated and envied at his mercy—a word or deed that was foreign to him. The man, now leaning heavily on him, had surpassed him in everything. He was a super-crook, daring and feared. Every master craftsman was his friend, and every rendezvous in the underworld was open to him in time of stress. Then there was the girl—the girl that worshipped at the throne of her master; the girl that—— Fate plays queer pranks. He was jubilant.

He had nothing to fear now from the Breed. A tap on the head with his gun when he had him stretched on the bed and removing the pad from the bullet-hole would end him. No one would suspect the Snake even when the Breed's body was discovered. Didn't Flynn shoot it out with him and wound him? Wouldn't the bulls think that he crawled out there and died? That was plain enough. And again: what did they care for one dead crook, or a hundred for that matter? He figured on double-crossing the Strangler; but that wouldn't do, on a second thought. The Strangler had no love for the Breed; in fact, he'd like to do the bumping off himself. He'd give him a share, then he would be playing safe. It looked too easy. Still there was a hollow feeling in the pit of his stomach.

Lightfoot, whose hand had been clinging to the Snake's arm, slowly relaxed his grip, and, unobserved by his Judas friend as they stood at the side of the disordered bed, he moved the hand slowly to the inner pocket of his coat after setting the bag on the bed.

Elated at what was seemingly the achievance of his abominable plan, and misconstruing his intended victim's meaning when he removed his hand, the Snake was somewhat irritated and disappointed when the Breed's arm again rested across his narrow shoulders.

But only for an instant. Nieder, with a curse, his ratty eyes aflame, sprang back, throwing off Lightfoot's arm as he did so. He was striving with a trembling hand to pull an automatic from his pocket.

"Whata yer doin'?" he snarled. His gun was out now, his other hand rubbing the side of his neck. "Blame yer!" he went on, letting his hand slip from his neck and staring at a crimson fleck on a finger. "Gawd!" he shrieked. "Blood! You—— Whata yer done? I'll fix yer!" He raised his gun.

The Breed was watching Nieder intently, a satanical smile and glowing eyes distorting his haggard face. It was the face of one whose spirit, overwhelmed by the poignancy of a hopeless suffering, is concentrating every energy, focalizing its every motion on a single mad, insensate purpose—revenge. With a lightning-like move his foot shot up, sending the automatic spinning from the Snake's hand against the wall, then fell to the floor with a clatter. Nieder stood before him, unarmed.

"It's not what I'm doing, it's what I've done, you filthy rat! See that?" Lightfoot's tone was clanging as he held out to view the stiletto. "Well, you yellow cur, that is what I did! That sticker has a poison point—Indian poison, *curare*, deadly poison. Do you follow me?"

The Snake was now an object of terror. The grim hand of death was slowly closing about his cowardly heart. The deadly venom from the poisonous plant was taking its toll as its victim, who was now on his knees, his glassy eyes rolled up, breathed laboriously.

"Have pity, Lightfoot! I ain't fit to die," he begged hoarsely, groveling at the half-breed's feet.

"Listen to me, Nieder; your time is short. You and the Strangler framed me for that Nelson job. Flynn—he was the one that pumped you dry. I've got a nice little surprise for the Strangler and may live long enough to deal with that flatfoot. I'm sorry, Snake, that you won't be able to see that taxi bum when he's wiggling. But never mind, you and he will be pals in h——. He'll tell you all about it there."

A spasmodic fit of coughing shook his frame as tiny streams of blood oozed from between his parted lips.

"They sent me up for the Nelson job, you remember?" he taunted. "Then you and the Strangler played your cards to get my girl. You remember what you two did to her—Henriette, I mean, you dog! She wouldn't have any of your game or his. You two framed her; planted that Westover haul in her room; told the bulls that she was a moll—she, that never filched a copper cent. That jail sentence broke her heart and her health."

"Her time would have been up to-day; to-day, you cur!" His voice was husky as he flayed his betrayer. "I pulled this job; it was gona by my last one—it's a safe bet at that," he jested grimly—"to get the kale to send her to California to get well again. This morning I got word that she was dead. And you, you accursed devil, you helped to kill her!"

The fury of words ended in guttural, inarticulate mumblings of rage, a wild incoherence of frenzy.

"Then," he went on when his storm of passion had abated, "I planned to get you and that hound outside. Flynn's bullet did the trick. I knew I was headed West. You was tickling yourself that you was clever enough to bring me here. You fool, I brought *you* here. I used the sparklers for a bait. You bit, and here you are to stay until your rotten carcass is carted off to Potters Field. You even was going to double-cross the Strangler. That's why you picked out the back room. You were playing right into my hands when you did it. Oh, you're a bird, Nieder; you always did go into everything feet first; you're going out that way this time."

The Snake was now swaying on his knees as he clung to his ebbing life. He cursed Lightfoot in the name of God and the name of the devil—curses that would shrivel a nobler soul than the Breed's. Then a shudder shook his frame, his eyes rolled upwards, a groan of mortal agony came from his lips as he swayed from side to side. With one mighty effort he raised his clutching hands in an appeal, then pitched forward on his face to the floor and lay still.

The Breed, silent, listened to it all, and watched the body on the floor. He turned away just as the tooting of an automobile horn sounded from without.

"Come along, you pup, I'm waiting for you!" he heard the Strangler yell. His smile was ghastly, his weak legs bending at the knees.

"Going fast," he muttered; "must finish my job before I go, though." He fished out a small flask from his hip pocket, took a long drink, squared his shoulders and walked unsteadily out of the room.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE Strangler, huddled behind his steering wheel, came alive with a jerk. He swung heavily from his seat and stood on the step, listening as he gazed up at the windows.

For the next few minutes he watched and pondered, then looked at his watch and uttered an oath.

"I wonder if that Snake is gona play square?" he mumbled, the veins in his bull neck showing blue beneath the skin. "If that sneak thinks he is gona put one over on me he'll find out, the——"

With a few quick strides he was at the door of the house, his gorilla-like arms swinging loosely at his side, one hand holding a revolver. At the door he stopped and listened. No sound of humans could he hear, only the flapping of some loose wall-paper that the dampness had stripped the wind seeping through the broken panes was fanning.

Gingerly he turned the knob and swung the door open, leaping nimbly to one side, his gun raised as he did so. Still no sound. Was it a trap? Had the Breed downed the Snake and was now dead upstairs? Or was it that the Breed's wound was only slight and he and Nieder got together and beat it? No, that wasn't the answer; he knew them both, and in a showdown—well, Lightfoot never forgot.

He next moved forward through the doorway crouching, his bullet head buried into his massive shoulders, his eyes peering furtively within. In the semi-gloom the place seemed ghostly. Further into the hall he glided until he was standing at the foot of the stairs. One

by one with a soft and catty tread he climbed the stairs to the landing above.

The door of the front room stood slightly ajar. He tiptoed to the opening, pistol at the level. Not a sound came from within. Advancing step by step, his gaze sweeping the room, he uttered a smothered cry and stood stock still. On the floor at the head of the bed, the afternoon sun rays glistening on its shiny surface, was the bag.

What did it mean? Was it a ruse? The thought alarmed him as he sprang for the bag, clutching it greedily, a faint grin supplanting the one of doubt on his face.

Hefting the bag in his hand as he gloated over his find, he moved quickly into the hall. Then a new-born suspicion rushed to his brain like a fever. He'd bet that they beat it with the loot, leaving the bag loaded with some worthless trash to fool him. They were probably sneaking around the back of the house at this moment. And then he thought——

With a snarl like an animal at bay he raced down the stairs. At the doorway he stopped and grinned foolishly. Their flight was still a mystery to him, and leaving the bag—well, what did he care, he had it now.

The purring of his motor aroused him from his ecstatical dream of wealth; he pocketed his gun and stepped outside. He stopped and looked at the bag meditatively. Turning, he entered the house again. He would just take a peep at the treasure—his treasure. Kneeling, one knee on the dusty floor, the bag set down before him, with trembling fingers he released the clasp and drew it open.

A muffled explosion followed simultaneously with the spattering hiss of spraying liquid, and the air reeked with the acid stench of chemicals.

With an unearthly shriek of mingled pain and terror the Strangler, who had been bowled over by the shock, sprang to his feet, beating his neck and face frantically with his hands and screaming insanely as he staggered blindly around the hall.

He groped about wildly, gasping for air as the noxious fumes seared his lungs, and heard a hollow, uncanny laugh, and a voice that was solemnly saying:

"This is the Breed speaking. The Snake is in the infernal regions waiting to greet you. You know what you and that dog have done. I could have killed you both; yes, with less trouble and suffering to myself. But no, my hand was stayed by the spirit of my ancestors —the redman. 'Make them suffer as they made you,' the voice of my forefathers whispered. 'They robbed you of all you held dear on this earth; they planned to take your life and deprived you of your liberty. So, as when the redman dominated the land, let your law be their law; torture them; we have spoken; 'tis the way of the redman.'"

A weird chant followed the condemnation as the Strangler, with one superhuman effort, gained the foot of the stairs and pitched forward in a heap.

CHAPTER SIX

FLYNN, when he started towards Deliski's tobacco store, had his attention centered on a crop-haired youngster emerging from the little store, a shiny brown bag swinging in one of his dirty hands.

At a hail from the officer the bareheaded urchin turned and gave him a searching glance, hurried along and was soon swallowed up in the passing throng. A quest failed to unearth the young bag-bearer, so Nick Flynn turned his attention to Deliski.

When he entered the store the Russian was nowhere in sight. A door at the rear of the store that led into a room used by him as a living-room was slightly ajar. To there the new-made detective walked noiselessly and peered within, suppressing a gasp at what he looked upon.

Deliski, his back half turned to the door, unconscious of the officer's presence, was gloatingly appraising the Carleeto diamonds that were strewn about on a table that he was bending over.

"Hands on the table, Deliski," ordered Flynn, stepping to his side and frisking him for weapons. Finding none, he dropped his own gun into his pocket. "Well, Deliski, it looks as if the department has got the goods on you at last. What have yer got to say? Receiving stolen property means a prison sentence. Where'd yer get 'em?"

"I didn't buy them, nor was I considering buying them," he defended himself stoically. "They were sent to me to return to their owner. Read that." He handed Flynn a soiled sheet of paper, shrugged his drooping shoulders and turned aside.

GOOD FRIEND:—Return these stones to Madame Carleeto; you know her address. The purpose that I stole them for has passed on. Send me your "blessing" for myself and my "friends"—Snake and Strangler. I may be lonesome where Flynn's bullet is sending me to. THE BREED.

A piece torn from the bottom of the letter caught the policeman's eye.

"Where's the rest o' this note? What does he mean by 'blessing'? Speak up, Deliski, or I'll take you in. By God, you'll talk then, I'll bet."

The law and its minions was held in profound respect by the alien for admirable reasons. Although he coveted the diamonds and was, before Flynn intervened, fighting down an impulse to betray the trust of his friend, he could see the alternative. What did it matter now; the Breed would be beyond mortal judgment. The law was the law, and the stones were lost to him forever. He handed over the torn postscript to the officer. It had Faro Charlie's address written on it.

Gathering up the diamonds and knotting them inside of a handkerchief, Flynn turned to Deliski as he placed them softly in an inside pocket of his coat.

"I'll take up your case with my superior, and in the meantime I warn you not to try to leave the city. You will be watched."

With the final warning he hurried from the shop, hailed a taxi and was soon breaking all speed laws on the road to Faro Charlie's.

With a grinding of brakes and rasping of gears, the car jerked to a stop abreast of the Strangler's taxi, whose motor was sputtering in its last throes, then died.

Flynn sprang from the car and rushed up the steps to the door that swung on rusty hinges. With his revolver at ready he kicked open wide the door and dashed into the hall. The acrid fumes of chemicals assailed his nostrils. A blackened, smoldering, smellish mass, tiny spirals of smoke issuing from it, the officer kicked into the corner amidst the jingling and rattling of loose metal.

He next came upon the body of the Strangler, who, after a hurried examination by the policeman, he found was not dead.

"Some of Deliski's contrivance did this devilish work," gritted Flynn. "Ugh!" he shuddered as he turned away. He then warily ascended the stairs to the floor above.

In the back room he found the body of the Snake. A glance at him settled all doubt. He was alive, but senseless. "The Snake—but who tried to bump him off?" mused Flynn. As he started to leave the room his foot kicked the dagger that was laying on the floor. "Blood will tell—the damn savage!" he spoke aloud. He put it carefully in his pocket.

As he entered the front room he halted. Lying on his back, his arms folded across his breast, a peaceful look on his ghastly face, was the Breed. His body was still warm, but the spark of life was out.

The diabolical atrocities nauseated the stalwart officer. Assuring himself that the half-breed was beyond human aid, he turned to leave the house.

A terrific explosion that shook the house from base to peak, followed by the splintering of wood and the crash of broken glass, sent Flynn reeling back against the wall. Black clouds of smoke rolled upwards amidst the crackling of flames, and soon the lower part of the building was a roaring inferno. Escape by the stairs was out of the question. Battering out a window-sash and all, Flynn dropped the Snake and his pal outside, then swung himself over the sill and dropped to the entablature over the entrance and clambered down one of the columns into the waiting arms of his anxious chauffeur.

Less than an hour after, as Flynn looked meditatively at the crook's smoldering pyre, he sighed and shook his head gravely.

He could not bring in his man for mortal judge to pass on. A higher tribunal had intervened. He had recovered the diamonds and could claim the reward. "A reward," he thought grimly, "through the extermination of a triangle of hate. I've saved the lives of two of the Breed's victims, too, but they'll only go to jail when they recover."

A Reformed "Fakir"

"I AM a reformed fakir," said a sleek-looking young man, as he drew the writer over into a corner, "and I s'pose it won't kill me if I give away some of the secrets of the business. Do you know, sir, that the smallest show on the road has to carry eighteen thieves along? Yes, sir! and the bigger the show the more numerous the workers. I know of one big show last season that had sixty men at work, and received $8,000 a week in privileges. Of course, the proprietors of the show disclaim all relationship with the fakirs, but every Monday morning the poor thieves have to come down with the dough to the door.

It is certainly wonderful how many privileges there are with a big show, aside from the legitimate. One man contracts to work the big joint, and pays from $24 to $1,000 a week for the privilege.

"Don't know what a big joint is? Why, it is where a fat guy drops his kale on a represent. You never hear about it unless he makes a kick, and as the chances are he is a deacon in a church, or a model man in the community, he keeps quiet, bearing his loss in silence. The big joint is worked only for big money, and only once a day. A wealthy come-on, a greedy lawyer, or whoever is spotted, is induced to go over to the show-grounds by two finely dressed, moral-looking men, whom he has met on the street while watching the procession. As they sidle around the side-show tent, talking about the weather, or the crops, or something, No. 3 is given the signal, and he comes up and begs the strangers (?) to come in and see his line of curiosities—no charge—merely wants to advertise his show, etc., and the victim goes in. He runs against a 'brace.' His new acquaintances tell him how to win. If he has the money in his clothes he lays it down; if he hasn't he goes to the bank and gets it. No. 5 accompanies him. Of course the poor man 'sees the show' before he comes out.

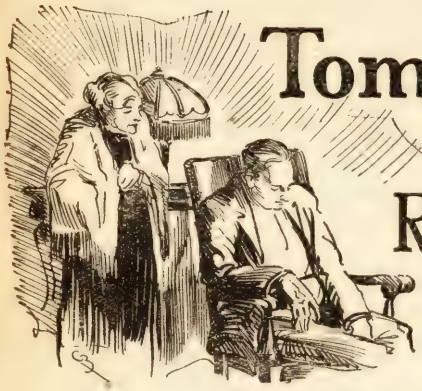
"If the guy makes a kick, then the square has to work. A square is one of the most important men in the point. It is his business, if he sees a kick made, to 'square' the powers that be; and then if the victim seeks to have anybody arrested he cannot succeed. In some places we were in, the square would go round in the morning and square the town—that is, he would fix everybody, and then the boys could work all day and night, and if any one threatened they would laugh at him. I remember in an Indiana town the square had fixed the place, and the very first man roped in was the high sheriff of the county. The lads got $6,000 off him, and he kicked. By paying back $1,000 they got it settled. I know a man who had the big joint with a show last season who cleared $30,000. As soon as the season was over he went to Chicago and bought out a clothing store. He says he'll never go on the road again, but then we all say that and the next season sees us on the job again.

"But I thought the large shows carried detectives along?"

"So they do, and some of those detectives are paid their salaries by the other thieves. All they have to do is to keep outside thieves from working on the ground. If an outsider is detected, he is handed over to the police. The privilege men are never detected. I was a detective part of last season, and the big shows are glad to bill the detective feature largely, as it shuts up the eye of the masses. But I have quit the business. I do think that some men are so green they ought to be knocked down and their money taken away from them, but somebody else may do it hereafter."

"What is the reason that so many apparently well-informed men readily bite at the big joint?"

"Because everything is done on a represent. You make a man believe that he can get something for nothing, and he's pretty sure to come in."



Tom Turns Up

by

Robert Russell

THE human form sat stiffly before the dying fire. The head was massive, fine. There was no light in the luxuriously appointed room other than that from the glowing logs. A tall man stood with his back to the hearth, a revolver in his right hand, gazing sternly at the motionless figure of the man before him. Gradually that look softened; there was almost affection in the sad eyes.

Suddenly the tall man leaned forward, stretched out his left hand and inserted his fingers between the collar and the neck of the form in the chair. He straightened up quickly, turned and switched on the electric lights, and again faced the wide-open eyes staring into the coals. Instantly the look of affection left his eyes. He dropped the revolver on a table close by, his hand displacing some papers lying there. On one sheet there was writing; it stirred in the breeze from the open window.

Through the stillness came the sound of the whistle of a locomotive. The man started, scribbled a few words on the margin of a timetable at which he had glanced, then switched off the lights. He passed across the floor quickly and out into the hall beyond. The sound of the opening and closing of a heavy door followed.

All was quiet as the coals glowed on. The breeze from the open window at the farther side of the room seized the paper and timetable and bore them to the edge of the hearth. The figure in the chair did not stir.

Another breath of air caught the timetable. It slid over the smooth hearth, halting against a deep-red coal. It grew brown, blackened. Gradually the dark color spread over the whole, obliterating the scribbled words of the tall man's pencil with the exception of six apparently meaningless ones. The last light of the dying coals lost its glow. The fire was dead.

Long hours passed. The hearth was coal black. The form in the chair was cold and stiff. A faint grayness filtered in through the windows. Outside the wind rose. The curtains at the open window bellowed inward. Somewhere a clock struck.

There came the sound of steps outside the open door of the room. A woman appeared, her hair almost white, her form bent. She came toward the window slowly and placed her hands on the raised sash, gave up the attempt to pull it down and turned toward the hearth. She walked slowly. Suddenly she halted, peering uncertainly at the massive head protruding above the back of the chair before the hearth.

"Mr. Ward," she said hesitatingly.

There was no sound, no movement.

She took a step forward.

"Mr. Ward," she repeated. She waited a moment, then shuffled on and stood bending forward gazing at the form there. She brushed her hand across her eyes as though to see more clearly. "Mr. Ward," she exclaimed again, touching the sleeve of the loose gray coat. Then, shuddering, she crumpled to the floor.

Outside the sun rose in the heavens. Sunlight streamed in at the windows, touching with its golden rays the whitening hair of the old woman. The minutes ticked on.

Presently there came the tinkling echo of a bell. The form of the old woman moved as she sat upright, her hands to her eyes. She turned to the stiff form in the chair. In her eyes was the same look of affection, grief, which had characterized the first glance of the tall man.

Again a shudder shook her frail form. She struggled to her feet and staggered past the chair across the floor to the door and uncertainly down the hall. Again came the bell. She opened the front door with difficulty and admitted a young man.

"Is this the home of Mr. James Ward?" he inquired.

"Oh, come in, sir, come in," was the woman's frightened whisper. "If you are a friend of his come and see what has happened, and tell me if he is dead." She started down the hall. "Hurry, sir," she urged.

The young man followed her quickly, and together they entered the room where the stiff figure sat before the hearth. The old woman, halting near the door, pointed. Tears were running down her cheeks.

The man crossed quickly to the hearth. A moment he gazed at the wide open eyes, apparently staring into the dead coals. He touched the brow, cold.

"He has been dead for hours," said the man. "I——" He stopped abruptly and darted across the floor to the old woman's side. She toppled over in his arms, her eyes closed.

Gently he carried her to the lounge by the window. He loosened her gown at the throat and forced a few drops of liquor from a flask he carried down her throat. She opened her eyes and looked up at him vaguely.

"I found him like that when I came down to prepare his breakfast," she said weakly. "Then I fainted, I think. Your ring at the bell must have brought me to." She hesitated. He gave her another sip of the liquor. She went on breathlessly. "He was so kind, sir, so good to me. I have been with him only four days, but he was so good to me, sir."

The young man placed his hand on her brow. "I——" She interrupted him, not hearing.

"I am all alone," she whispered; "except for Jennings, there is no one else in the house; just Jennings upstairs." Again her eyes closed. She was breathing regularly.

The young man arranged the pillows of the lounge. She lay back. He crossed to the fireplace, glanced about, and then moved quickly from the room.

Upstairs he entered every apartment. His rapid search extended to the third floor and the fourth. There was no one in any of the rooms. There were no signs of human occupancy. As he descended slowly he heard the woman's voice, speaking over the telephone.

"Do hurry," she was murmuring. "Mr. James Ward. Yes, yes. Dead." She gave an address, hung up the receiver and tottered back to the lounge. "The police," she whispered faintly as the young man hurried into the room. "I telephoned the police." Again she lay silent, motionless. He tried to rouse her gently. No response.

"Who is Jennings?" said the man. "Who is Jennings?" he repeated. And then again: "Who is Jennings?"

"He was so good to me," came the reply, whispered, barely audible. "So good, so good. He would not have let me go blind; so good to me."

He bent over her trying to catch every syllable.

There came a ring at the doorbell. The man hurried down the hall and opened the door to admit a policeman in uniform and another dressed in citizen's clothing. Small, important, the second individual glanced at the young man.

"Where is the woman who telephoned?" he snapped brusquely.

The young man looked at the important person a moment before speaking. "You are a headquarters detective, I presume?" he said.

"I am a very close friend of the chief," returned the other importantly. "Please answer my question, and do not discuss me."

The young man glanced at the policeman, who stood stolidly indifferent. He turned again to the other.

"The old woman is not well," he said, a twinkle in his eyes. "I was upstairs when she called you up."

The "chief's friend" eyed him suspiciously. "You live here?" he asked impudently. The young man shook his head. He was smiling.

"I arrived but a few minutes ago," he said.

The important person glanced at the policeman, nodded toward the other and turned again to the young chap who had admitted him. "Where is the body?" he asked, biting out his words.

"This way," replied the other, leading the way down the hall. He halted just inside the door of the room and pointed to the form, stiff, forbidding, there in the chair before the cold hearth.

"This is what the old woman led me to the moment she let me in," he said. "I judge, sir," he went on, addressing the "chief's friend," "that you desire no assistance. It will be a privilege to watch you at work." He leaned against the wall, folded his arms and assumed an interested expression.

The important person glanced again knowingly at the policeman, passed to the hearth and bent over the form in the chair.

The young man by the door spoke casually, his manner quite disinterested. "I might tell you," he said, "that the old woman said there is some person named 'Jennings' who lived with Mr. James Ward here, and that Jennings is missing. I have searched the house. It is empty."

"Thank you," mumbled the chief's friend. "I shall make a search presently myself." He reached his hand into the inside pocket of the gray coat on the form in the chair and drew forth several letters and papers. There were envelopes addressed to "Mr. James Ward," a deposit slip showing $40,000 had been placed in the bank a week before, a check book, on one stub of which appeared the entry, "Cash, $40,000," dated the preceding day, and five one-thousand-dollar bills.

An exclamation escaped the chief's friend as the crisp notes slipped through his fingers. Again his glance at the young man by the door held more than a hint of suspicion. "You came here only a few minutes ago," he said, as though reminiscently. A third meaning look was directed at the policeman.

"James Ward deposited $40,000 in the bank a week ago," he said slowly. "Yesterday he drew it out. Last night he was——" He paused as his eyes fell upon the revolver lying on the table. He ended the sentence impressively: "Last night Mr. James Ward was murdered."

Again he paused, noting the effect of his pronouncement. Evidently a bit disappointed that the young man by the door was not more moved, he continued his examination of the papers in his hands. "Pawn tickets," he murmured. "Mr. James Ward was preparing to get together all his cash. Probably he did get it together. He has five thousand dollars left, and he is dead." He held his hand over the left side of the body, nodding slowly. He examined the revolver; one chamber was empty.

The old woman on the lounge stirred. Now she sat up, her hands to her eyes. He spoke to her abruptly.

"You say a man named Jennings has disappeared?" he asked. "Who is this Jennings?"

"Mr. Ward's valet, sort of secretary," she replied, still in a daze. "He was so good to me, Mr. Ward, sir. He wanted a doctor to cure my eyes; I am losing my sight, sir."

The chief's friend drew a notebook from his pocket and made an entry. The young man by the door left his place, moved quickly to the lounge, where the old housekeeper lay, and whispered a few words to her as he arranged her pillows more comfortably.

"Here, you," snapped the important master of ceremonies, "I don't want any private conversations. I'm doing this."

The other straightened up, smiling. "I thought," he said quietly, "that I might get some information; she is a bit frightened. I——"

"This is not your affair," snapped the chief's friend. Again he glanced meaningly at the policeman, at the same time nodding toward the door leading into the hall. The officer moved leisurely in that direction, finally taking up his stand beside it.

"You must remember," continued the self-appointed investigator, "that I found you here with a dead man, and the dead man had a large sum of money in his pocket."

The young man stepped forward quickly; his face was flushed. He opened his lips to speak; he hesitated, then moved backward, bowing in mock humility.

"I will be glad to wait your pleasure," he said. He stood now beside the motionless figure in the chair. The chief's friend was questioning the old woman, but getting little satisfaction from her wandering replies.

The young man's right hand was busy beneath the coat worn by the silent thing there before the hearth. His eyes were upon the "investigator." The moment the latter turned away from the woman in evident disgust over her lack of responsiveness, he assumed an innocent attitude of indifference.

"Possibly you will allow me to help the old woman upstairs to a room," said the young man. "She seems about all in."

"Go with them, officer," ordered the chief's friend. "And," he added meaningly, "both of you, come back down right away." He dropped to his knees and began examining the sheet of paper lying there and the unburned bit of the timetable. The policeman and the young stranger lifted the woman and carried her from the room.

"She's all right," said the officer when they had returned. "But she can't seem to understand anything. She's lying down."

"Look here," exclaimed the chief's friend, taking the sheet of paper he had found on the hearth across to the policeman. "Listen." He read the words written there in a low voice. Then he stepped back and looked his satisfaction. "This letter from James Ward's brother makes everything clear. Tom Ward and James Ward, here, fought years ago. Tom goes away. Then years after he writes James, this man here, he's coming back. This letter must have just come. Tom comes home last evening, finds James, his brother, with $40,000. He and Jennings kill the old man and skip. Plain as day. Find Jennings and you'll find Tom Ward, and you'll find the man who did this thing."

Satisfaction oozed from his eye. He had shown the policeman how an intelligent man could solve a murder mystery. He would enjoy telling it all to the chief, his friend. People made too much fuss over detectives, anyway. All a real man needed was brains and common sense.

But what was this other fellow doing here? It was time, now, to look into his reason for coming to the home of James Ward just at this moment. Certainly this man was not Jennings; the housekeeper said that. And he could not be Tom Ward, the brother, returned. The age was not right. He turned to the young man, frowning.

That person was coming toward him, his hands behind his back. His face did not express fear or awe of the "chief's friend." There was almost amusement in his glance.

"I tried to tell the poor old woman something——" he began, but his sentence ended abruptly. He raised his hand, demanding silence. The sound of a step came from beyond the door into the hall. The sound was followed by a presence. A tall man stood in the opening. His eyes were kindly, his manner agreeable. He surveyed the group, the policeman, the young chap who had been speaking, and the important friend of the chief.

There was a moment's silence. Then the master of ceremonies strode forward.

"Are you Jennings?" he exclaimed. "How did you get in?"

"I am Jennings," was the quiet reply, "and I let myself in with my pass-key. But why, may I ask, do you assume that rather unpleasant way of speaking to me?" There was no anger in his tone, only interested surprise.

The chief's friend assumed his most important manner. He had learned of the "third degree." He believed in it, and misunderstood it as most amateur detectives misunderstand.

He stepped close to the tall man and shook his finger in his face.

"Why did you come back to the scene of your crime," he cried.

It was the cue for Jennings to quail and grow pale. But Jennings did not quail. Instead he seated himself on the lounge with a little gesture of weariness.

"Are you from headquarters?" he asked almost gently.

"I am a friend of the chief's," retorted the other. "And you'd better answer my ques-

tions." His voice was raised to an absurd degree. Unwonted excitement took this form of expression. "When did you see Mr. Ward last alive? Or let me begin back of that." He made the correction quickly. "Why did James Ward draw all his money out of the bank, and why did he pawn so many articles?"

Jennings hesitated, then replied slowly, as though hesitating to betray a confidence.

"Mr. James Ward received a letter yesterday from his brother, Mr. Thomas, with whom he had quarreled years ago," he began. "Mr. Thomas was coming back; he expected him any minute. Mr. James Ward, a very kindly man, no longer strong, could not bear the thought of life with his brother with whom he had never been able to live in peace."

The chief's friend uttered a grunt of satisfaction. "Looks as though they didn't 'live in peace' after they got together," was his comment, glancing at the stiff form in the chair.

"When I talked with Mr. James last evening," Jennings went on, without heeding the rough comment of the other, "he told me that he would rather go away and leave Tom to enjoy this house alone than to stay and try and live with him, if he was as he used to be. He told me he had prepared for the journey. Mr. James did not blame his brother. He took a portion of the blame for their failure to get on to himself. Mr. James Ward, idealist, is the proper characterization."

The chief's friend had been showing his impatience. The gentle manner, the courteous speech, the evident refinement of Jennings, whom he had already set down as the murderer, aggravated him. Jennings's final eulogy was the last straw.

"Cut out the praise of Ward," he commanded, "and tell me what you did after talking with him. Understand me, Jennings, you——"

The young man who had been passive up to this moment stepped forward quickly. Jennings rose from his seat. His eyes were no longer gentle, kindly. Even the policeman looked disgusted at the tone assumed by the chief's friend. The smile had left Jennings's face. A dignity seemed to come to him, free from all gentleness of poise, manner. He looked down upon the amateur detective with the suggestion of scorn which a big man feels for one inferior to him in breadth of understanding.

"I respect the law," he said. "In a way I suppose you represent the law. I will answer any questions you ask, but I will volunteer nothing. Please put your questions and have them over with."

"What did you do after talking with James Ward?" snapped the chief's friend.

"I asked him if I could do anything for him, and then I went back upstairs to my room."

"What then?"

"I went to sleep, I suppose, but wakened later. I looked into Mr. Ward's room, as I often do, to see if he was all right. He has not been strong. His bed had not been occupied. I came down here after dressing quickly."

The chief's friend moved forward quickly, looked straight into the eyes of the tall man, and cried out: "And then you shot him!"

Jennings did not move. He gave the impression of a great dog looking down upon a snarling puppy.

"No, I did not shoot him," he said quietly.

"Well?" muttered the disappointed friend of the chief.

"It was dark in the room," Jennings went on wearily, but determined to give his information. "I came to the fire before which I had left Mr. Ward sitting. At first I thought he had fallen asleep in his chair. My foot struck something on the floor. I picked it up; it was an old revolver of Mr. Ward's. I was startled. I could not see the face before me; I could see only the old gray coat Mr. Ward wore as a lounging jacket."

"Make it short," exclaimed the chief's friend, frowning.

Jennings bowed low in mock obeisance. "Suddenly the figure before me seemed that of a stranger," he hurried on. "I reached and touched him. The body was cold. I felt between the collar and the band of his shirt in my excitement, never thinking of the lights for the moment. Then I was sure it was not James Ward; the collar was loose; those worn by Mr. James Ward are tight."

The chief's friend scoffed. "Rot," he ejaculated.

"I turned on the lights," Jennings went on, more slowly now. "That man in the chair

did not look, and does not look like Mr. James Ward in any particular except that he has a fine head, and he—or it—is wearing Mr. James Ward's gray coat."

The chief's friend crossed quickly to the hearth. He looked incredulously at Jennings.

"I surmised at once," the latter went on, "that this was Mr. Thomas Ward, that he had returned, that some accident had happened, and that Mr. James Ward had carried out his intention of going away. I knew that my place was with him. I wrote a few words to the housekeeper and ran to catch the train." He stopped, turned and sank wearily to his former seat on the lounge. Presently he raised his head again.

"Do you want me to help you in this matter," he said with dignity, "or do you want to go on solving it in your own way?"

The amateur detective drew a slip of paper from his pocket and read the words written there on the bit of timetable: "I will get back in time." He glanced at Jennings. "What did you write to the housekeeper?" he asked, seeking still to find some flaw in the tall man's story.

"Merely that I expected to get back in time to attend to the body of Mr. Thomas Ward: I hoped to overtake Mr. James at the next station. I knew he would come back when I told him his brother was dead."

The chief's friend laughed loud. "That's good," he cried. "Do you suppose any jury would believe that?"

"Mr. James Ward did not go away leaving his brother dead, sitting in that chair," said Jennings solemnly.

Again the chief's friend laughed.

And again the young man who had been an interested spectator to the scene stepped forward. He spoke quietly.

"I tried to explain some things to the old woman," he said. "She could not understand until the very last, just before we took her upstairs. I have tried to explain those same things several times, but this efficient friend of the chief's has seemed to have a dim suspicion that I might be connected with the crime; at any rate he would not listen. Perhaps he will listen now?" The young man's voice rose in a gentle question. He stood waiting in pretended respect for the verdict of the amateur detective.

The suspense was broken. Jennings rose quickly and moved to the door.

"Mr. James Ward is coming," he said calmly. "He has been resting in the front room ever since we returned. I did not want him to come in here; I heard your voices. Probably you have aroused him. He is not strong, gentlemen. I ask you to have consideration."

Now he stepped to the side of the man who entered the room. James Ward walked slowly to the hearth, Jennings close to him. They stood by the side of the chair in which sat the form, cold, forbidding.

James Ward faced the others. There was a splendid dignity in his poise, grief in the tone of his voice as he spoke.

"I presume you are officers of the law," he said quietly. "I must tell. My brother came back last night after Jennings had gone to bed. Tom was almost in rags. I gave him my coat and seated him before the fire. I had prepared to go away. I had means. I left him only five thousand dollars, but he had this house to live in. He did not speak to me—only a few words." The broken man hesitated, then lifted his head proudly. "He only said to me: 'Well, James, I've come back, damn you.'" His head bowed, his hands were raised to his face. Jennings's hand went out to him.

The weary voice came again. "And I would not have known him," murmured James Ward. "After thirty years I would not have known him—my own brother. And now he is dead. We parted enemies."

Across the room darted the young man whose attempts to tell his story had been frustrated so often. His eyes flashed contempt at the friend of the chief, admiration for the weak, elderly man before him.

"I had to let you tell your story, Mr. James Ward," he exclaimed. "I had to get the whole story for my report. This body in the chair is not that of your brother. This man was a noted criminal. I traced him from San Francisco. I learned of his plan to impersonate Thomas Ward. I came here in following him. That 'friend of the chief' over there," and he turned contemptuously to the amateur detective, "has balled things up. I let him go on.

I told the housekeeper this was not James Ward. I would have told everything before, only this man was so officious. And let me remind him of one little matter he overlooked." He turned and faced the chief's friend, smiling now at the other's consternation.

"The chief's friend hasn't even examined the body to see whether or not he was shot. I'll bet he had his last attack of the heart."

There was a silence that could be felt. James Ward, overcome by the news, had half fallen into a chair. Jennings was bending over him. The policeman was smiling behind his hand. And the friend of the chief was moving slowly toward the chair upon which he had thrown his hat when he had first entered the room.

The young man went on. "I made a hurried examination," he said, "and failed to discover any wound, though I see," he added, picking up the revolver, "that one chamber of the gun is empty."

"I fired a shot from it three years ago," murmured James Ward.

Suddenly it seemed as though a blast of fresh air, sunlight laden, burst into the room.

"Somebody left the front door open," came the hearty voice. "Helloa, Jimmy. Having a party? Come here, you old rascal and welcome your repentant brother Tom; say, but we'll have a good time the rest of our lives."

Great, strong, radiating good humor, Tom Ward came home.

FISHING WITH HANDS

IT is hard to believe that human beings can become expert enough at swimming and diving to be able to catch fish in their watery home, yet it is so.

The native Hawaiians are the ones who do it, and it is a common sight in the districts that are not densely populated to see men, women and children engaged in thus catching fish, shrimp and crabs.

Sometimes they crouch in shallow water and feel around the coral and lava bottom for the creatures. So skillful have they become by practice that even the swiftest fish rarely escape. They can seize a crab and jerk him out of his rocky lair before he can use his claws.

The Hawaiians are assisted in this mode of fishing by the fact that many species of Pacific Ocean fish hide themselves in clefts in the rocks and lie there when danger threatens until their foe disappears.

This habit is utilized by the men and boys to catch those fish which live in deep water. They tie a bag around their waists and dive straight down to the bottom. There they hold fast to a rock with one hand, to keep themselves on bottom, and with the other they feel and grope in the crevices or under the overhanging rock ledges till they get their hands around a fish. Then they put him into the bag and grope for another one until they have to ascend for air.

A daring kind of fishing is that for the octopus. The Hawaiian dives to the bottom and pokes a stick into crevices and holes in which the octopus loves to hide. When the stick touches one of the ugly things it invariably takes hold so tightly with its tentacles that it can be dragged forth. The moment the fisherman has thus hauled it out, he lets himself ascend. He goes up so fast that he reaches the surface before the angry and stubborn devilfish has made up his mind to let go its hold on the stick. When he reaches the surface the Hawaiian instantly grabs the octopus and instantly bites deep into its head, thus killing the brute at once.

Another rather daring form of fishing is that for the ula, a species of lobster. When the fisherman is ready to go down for this creature he wraps his right hand in a long piece of cloth. Then he dives and feels around with his bandaged hand until he finds the ula. Frequently he will work so fast that he will bring up two or three ulas from one dive.

Now and then the fisherman finds a puhi in a hole instead of an ula. Then the bandage does not save him from being badly bitten, for the puhi is a great sea eel of immense strength and with jaws set with immensely sharp teeth.

Behind the Scenes

By J. M. SCANLAND

MONSIEUR ALEXANDRE LECOMPTE, cashier of the Bank de Canal, was one of the most prominent citizens of the "French Quartier" of New Orleans, and had made a fortune by speculating in cotton. He was of middle age, and had but recently married Mlle. Celeste Bossier, aged about twenty years, and one of the most beautiful and accomplished ladies in the French colony, known as "Little Paris." Both of them were members of ancient families, and, though she was not wealthy in her own right, her natural graces were considered by society as an offset to his riches, more especially as he was not handsome and much the older.

They lived in a magnificent mansion on Esplanade street. It was of the Southern style of architecture, almost buried amid magnolia trees, orange bushes, and the brightest of flowers that bloom in the South. The madame had servants at her call and her own private limousine. It would seem that here was everything that fancy could crave or the heart desire to complete one's happiness. After banking hours, with her husband, it was a brisk drive to Lake Pontchartrain, then dinner at home, and then to the opera. On these occasions the madame was tastefully and richly dressed and resplendent in jewels—the object of admiration of the men and envied by most of the ladies.

The Lecompte box was the lower one to the left, and thus the monsieur and madame had an excellent view and also the advantage of being able to hear the words as well as the music. When their society friends came to the Lecompte box to pay their respects to the monsieur and compliment the madame she received their empty stock phrases as one accustomed to them and awarded each with the usual smile and studied inclination of the head. This displeased the monsieur, for he was jealous, yet he did not know whom. "A treasure should be guarded," was his philosophy.

On the evening of the presentation of Moliere's comedy, "Le Depit Amoreaux," Monsieur Lecompte noticed that his wife gave particular attention to Pierre Legreux, the jealous husband in the play. At the conclusion of an impassioned scene she tossed a bouquet upon the stage, which fell at his feet. Legreux picked it up, turned to the box, bowed, smiled, and as he entered the wings turned, leveled his eyes upon her, bowed and held the bouquet to his lips. The madame blushed, and her husband turned pale. There were audible whispers in the audience, and hundreds of eyes were turned upon the Lecompte box.

Society had scarcely ceased gossiping about the little romantic incident of the bouquet when it was given a choicer morsel in a paragraph in the dramatic column of the *Bee*, which announced that "Madame L——, a very prominent society lady, would soon appear in the rôle of the star in Moliere's comedy, 'Le Depit Amoreaux,' and that she was being coached by Monsieur Legreux, who would play opposite." In those days there were no "society" columns, and ladies' names were seldom mentioned in the newspapers, and then mostly by initials only. But society knew whom the initials pointed to, and shrugged its shoulders and continued to gossip in louder tones.

Monsieur Lecompte objected to his wife appearing on the stage, even for charity.

"The next thing," said he to his determined wife, "will be a professional engagement, and then——"

He left the sentence unfinished, but she understood what he meant.

"I will appear in this play, no matter what may happen!" she coldly replied, casting a determined, almost a defiant, look at her enraged husband.

At the representation of the comedy the opera house was crowded, the elite being largely represented, as the French quarter was much interested in the appearance of the society star. Lecompte had invited a number of friends to occupy his box, stating that he would not be present, as his presence might perhaps embarrass his wife. She intuitively knew, however, that this was a pretext. Her sharp eyes discovered him in the rear of a group just as the curtain raised.

"He is there!" whispered the madame to Legreux as they stood in the wings exchanging confidences.

Lecompte caught a glimpse of the pair, and his face turned livid.

"You are not ill, I hope! Or is it fear that the madame will not score a success?" asked Monsieur Sompayrac, a friend in the box. "I know the madame has talent!"

"Yes!" mechanically replied Lecompte, "but I would rather that she failed!"

"Fail! Do you want the world to laugh?" replied Sompayrac.

"Rather that than a stage career for my wife!"

Monsieur Lecompte then turned his eyes towards the characters on the stage—the husband and his faithless wife, impersonated by his own wife and her supposed lover, Legreux.

"That is too realistic," he said to himself rather than to Sompayrac.

At the fall of the curtain on the first act there was loud applause and calls for the principals. As they came before the curtain Lecompte turned his back upon them and went out of his box.

"What will be the next?" whispered a lady in an adjoining box to her gossiping friends. This incident created a flutter in the social groups, and the hubbub of conversation continued until the curtain rose on the second act.

At the end of the play Lecompte's car drove to the stage entrance. The wait was long before his wife appeared. She was much disappointed in not receiving an empty compliment from her husband, though she knew that such would be meaningless. After a painful silence she asked:

"Did you not enjoy the play, Monsieur Lecompte? And are you not proud of my success?"

"I do not consider that the applause of the rabble indicates success! But the acting was too realistic in some parts!"

"Ah, indeed! Please particularize, so that I may correct my interpretations!"

"The love scenes!" quickly replied Lecompte.

"Love scenes cannot be too realistic!" replied his wife, biting her lips in anger.

"Do you intend to appear again?" asked Lecompte coldly.

"Certainly! Why not? But it will always be for charity. I could not think of adopting the stage as a profession, and of course you know that!"

"Why do you act at all? There is nothing to be gained—certainly not social influence, but rather it is a loss!"

"Oh, it is so fascinating—the applause; a tribute to genius and——"

"Yes, the applause of friends, like a claque."

"Oh, of course I have no talent!" sarcastically replied Celeste.

"Pardon me, I did not refer to your case, but what is it to be a great artist? They only repeat the words of others!"

"We are to rehearse the comedy next Tuesday for its production," said Celeste, as if tired of the conversation.

"You must give up all ideas of the stage. I do not want my name dragged down to the level of such people," said Lecompte firmly as the carriage stopped at the door.

Madame Lecompte did not answer, but bit her lip, shrugged her shoulders and went to her bedroom.

A few days later a boy entered the Bank de Canal with a note for Monsieur Lecompte. "Stop, boy!" exclaimed the banker, seeing that the inscription was in a feminine hand. He read:

"Are you blind? Drives to the lake, luncheons at the Maison Doree! Le Depit Amoreaux!"

"Who gave you this note?"

"A lady. Don't you know?" replied the boy, grinning as if he thought the banker was merely pretending ignorance.

"Where was she when she gave you this note?"

"Mister, you can't fool me! And the lady

told me not to tell, and she can't fool me either!"

The banker loosened the boy's tongue with a silver dollar.

"It's a lady who stays at the opera house. I was standing at the corner of the Opera Café, and she motioned me to come over to where the actors go in, and handed me the note, and she said, "Do not wait."

"But you must wait a minute and take a reply!"

The banker wrote: "Le Depit Amoreaux: I have just received your kind note. I am not blind; would like to be enlightened, especially by one with argus eyes. Will you take luncheon with me to-morrow at 12 M.? If this hour is not convenient, please designate another. Seeing that you are interested, I confidently expect you at the Maison Doree."

After receiving the note the boy stood a moment as if in deep thought. Another silver dollar expedited his movements.

"I cannot be mistaken. It is Mlle. Legendre, the star of the Opera Comique. She does not wish my wife to appear again, and she may be—— No, I shall not accuse the lady. But why does she send this note? And yet it may not be her. We shall soon see," concluded the banker.

Mlle. Legendre was surprised at receiving the note, yet really she was not angry. She could say more than it would be safe to write, and express more by hints and shrugs than could be imparted in words. Furthermore she would meet the rich banker, and—— She shrugged her shoulders and smiled, evidently pleased at the unexpected turn of events.

"A private dining-room. The lady will be here in a few minutes," said Lecompte to "French Jean" as he entered the Maison Doree.

"Yes, monsieur. It is the madame?" asked the manager with a very polite bow, as the banker was one of his best customers.

"No, it is a friend. Not the madame."

"Ah!" exclaimed Jean, bowing again and smiling broadly and knowingly. "She will mention your name?"

In a few minutes Mlle. Legendre was shown into the private room. Lecompte arose, bowed, and extended his hand, saying:

"I am glad of this interview, and presume that I have the honor of addressing Mlle. Legendre?"

"And I the honor of meeting Monsieur Lecompte, though informally, and I fear that I have acted incautiously, or it may appear to you as rudely, and——"

"No. Mlle. Legandre, I am grateful for this meeting. Be seated, we shall have a bottle of wine and luncheon."

"Do you not think it strange, monsieur, that I should have sent that note, for I do not deny it?"

"No and yes. Was it that you wished to save a woman for herself by preventing her from adopting a stage career?"

"The madame belongs to society. That is her career, not the stage."

"Admitted. But the other, the lake and the dinners?"

"I overheard their conversations behind the scenes. But it is for you to find out the particulars."

"I am inquisitive as to why you take such an interest. It is not for me; are you interested in the madame, or is it that she has come between——"

Mlle. Legendre upset her wine-glass in her confusion and turned pale.

"Monsieur Lecompte! How can you accuse me of being jealous of Monsieur Legreux. He is nothing to me!"

Looking her straight in the eye, Lecompte asked brusquely: "Then why this interest? Let us be plain and understand each other.

Mlle. Legendre's face flushed, she bowed her head in confusion, and seeing that she had acted without studying well her part, replied:

"Monsieur Lecompte, I will be frank. It is not your wife's career that I object to, though she has taken my favorite rôle in 'Le Depit Amoreaux,' and will take my rôle of 'Elmire' in 'Tartuffe,' which is underlined for next week."

"What!" exclaimed Lecompte, thumping the table and rising in excitement.

"I care nothing for her success, for that is of an amateur, and counts for nothing elsewhere, but——"

"Then it is the other?"

"Yes, monsieur," replied Mlle Legendre, burying her face in her hands. "Monsieur

Legreux and I are engaged, and I fear that now——"

"I shall forbid Madame Lecompte to again enter the opera house, and if I had any proof I would challenge him."

"That would bring about a scandal, and why should you run the risk of being killed? He is to blame. The innocent should not place themselves at the mercy of those who have wronged them."

"You speak philosophically, Mlle—like another Sappho, who knew everything."

Mlle. Legendre smiled and continued: "It is better to forget, as I shall do."

"But I do not forget that I have been wronged; that is, if it is proven that the actor has fooled my wife he shall fight a duel with me."

"Listen again to Sappho," said the mademoiselle, smiling. "Married women are never fooled. They know their duty to their husbands."

"True, my fair Sappho!" exclaimed Lecompte, raising his glass and motioning to the actress. Their eyes met, and each seemed to read the thoughts of the other. Simultaneously they arose and stood a moment, as if there were something more to say. There was a ringing laugh in the adjoining room. The monsieur's eyes dropped, his face turned white, his frame trembled, and he started toward the door, exclaiming, "That is—her!"

Mlle. Legendre rushed between the man and the door, exclaiming:

"Would you have a scene? You will compromise the madame yourself, and as for me—well, it matters little; I am only an actress."

"No. Mlle. Legendre, I will wait." As he closed the door, which he had managed to partly open, he caught a glimpse of his wife and Legreux as they turned toward the stairs.

Lecompte stood as if petrified, then sank into a chair, and cried.

Mlle. Legendré now regretted the part she had taken in the affair. She reasoned that she could perhaps have forgotten Legreux's treachery and let the other affair work out as fate or circumstances willed.

But the actress was like all women, revengeful to the point of blind hatred, and had acted too hastily, perhaps. This passion was stronger with her than love. She was rather of a cold disposition, and while she was not pretty, her complexion was so brilliant that it may be styled beautiful. She had a high, intellectual-looking forehead, large expressive blue eyes, heavy black brows, long lashes, a well-rounded form, small hands, small feet prettily arched, and her walk was artlessly graceful. Her voice was sympathetic in tone, sweet and clear, and she charmed one with evident unconsciousness.

"Will you be at the opera house to-night, monsieur? The play is 'La Malade Imaginaire," said Mlle. Legendre with a mischievous smile.

"Perhaps it will cure me of my imaginary jealousy," replied Lecompte, raising his head and looking her in the eyes.

"Let us hope that our suspicions are unfounded," said the actress as she arose, signifying that it was time to leave.

"May I have the great pleasure of meeting you again?" asked Lecompte, taking her hand and pressing it.

"Perhaps," replied the actress, laughing.

"I shall confide in your discretion. I know that you have spoken truthfully. You may command my friendship at any time."

"Many thanks, Monsieur Lecompte. I appreciate what you say, especially as I never had a real true friend."

That night Lecompte and his wife sat in the box amid a few friends. He compared the beautiful, intellectual woman on the stage with his wife—a society woman, pretty, but almost stupid. And as he looked at Legreux, a "stage idol" and of the type of men known as social favorites, he reasoned that it was quite natural that they should be drawn toward each other. And as for himself and the beautiful actress, he could only whisper to himself that fate so wills it that some mortals meet too soon or—too late. The monsieur enjoyed himself so well at the play and laughed so immoderately at the imaginary illness of the man who would be sick, that he for the moment forgot his own, the greatest of all ills—jealousy. He was so affable and talkative on the way home that Madame Lecompte now felt sure that he had withdrawn all objections to her appearing on the stage, and she felt secure in her affair with Legreux.

The next few days passed pleasantly. The

madame had evidently gotten over her craze for the stage, Lecompte thought to himself. She seemed to be more affectionate and desirous of a reconciliation. He then thought of his luncheon with Mlle. Legendre and smiled.

"A note for Monsieur Lecompte!" exclaimed a messenger boy as he entered and interrupted the cashier's reverie.

The boy hastily left with his tip, and the cashier, smiling, opened the note and read:

"My Friend:—Something tells me that something dreadful has happened. I hope that you have not been involved in a duel. Monsieur L. has not been to rehearsal. I am alarmed for you. Please write me at once at my hotel, —— Royal street. Sincerely,

"Sappho."

Lecompte again smiled, his face brightened, and while studying its possible meaning and hints, another boy entered with another note.

"From Celeste. Some little commission, no doubt," said Lecompte to himself as he looked at the inscription. Still smiling he leisurely opened the note and read:

"Monsieur Lecompte:—I leave you and forever. Do not follow me. It would be useless. I have always been unhappy with you. I never did love you, and you have always been jealous. I now know what love is. Au revoir.

Celeste."

Lecompte's hands trembled, his face turned ashen white, he placed his hand to his forehead and sank into his chair.

He seized his hat and walked rapidly toward Royal street. He neither saw nor spoke to his acquaintances, and many of them turned to look as he walked or rather ran by them. He rang the bell two or three times in quick succession, and Mlle. Legendre, who had just arrived, ran to the door, alarmed.

"Oh, monsieur. What has happened? You are as pale as a ghost, and have you had an encounter with——"

The sentence was unfinished as she looked upon the man's face, showing alternate rage and despair. He did not reply, but handed her the note and sank into a chair.

Mlle. Legendre read the note, then reread it, as if in reading her lines in the play in order to interpret the meaning of the author.

"There is no mistake; it is—him! That is why he was not at rehearsal," said the actress, handing the note to the monsieur, whose trembling hand scarcely could grasp it. He raised his head and looked at her appealingly, as one in affliction does when desiring consolation, though knowing it is of no value.

She still stood at his side, her features showing real sympathy for the unfortunate man, who could only shriek:

"Revenge! I'll follow them all over the world!"

"No, monsieur," said Mlle Legendre in soothing tones. "Revenge would only increase your mental agony. If a man kills his rival the woman gets another lover; that is all. A man is foolish to pursue a wife who elopes. If he brings her back—well, she will be the same."

"But not all wives are that way, mademoiselle?" said the monsieur, his heart softening.

"When they run away they are all alike. If the husband is killed she impatiently waits the end of the mourning period when she can marry the lover. It is not only on the stage that such things are seen. Dramas are written from life. 'Le Depit Amoreaux' was part of the life of Monsieur Moliere."

"You speak like a savant, my little Sappho. The madame never loved me; if she had she would not have betrayed me," replied Lecompte, growing calmer.

It was after banking hours, a week later, when Monsieur Lecompte called on Mlle. Legendre in her rooms on Royal street. A luncheon had been prepared, for a repast aids conversation. Melete, the maid, looked with good-natured pride at the change in the programme, or rather the cast—Monsieur Lecompte, the handsome, well-built man of affairs and ability, for the foppish, smirking, society idol Legreux. He sat at the table with more dignity than Legreux, who may be said to have none at all. At a slight nod of the head the maid retired.

"Mlle. Legendre, I have decided to leave New Orleans. My name has been dishonored, and I cannot bear the sneering looks and shrugs of my acquaintances."

"It is unfortunate, Monsieur Lecompte. But

if you will listen to me, and I have only your welfare in view——"

The monsieur bowed and smiled.

"I would say, 'No!' A person should be held responsible only for their own acts. And besides, scandal always follows, go where one will. It has wings swifter than the one who seeks to flee from it."

"But the slights of society?"

"Tell them," said the actress slowly and with emphasis, "to look to their own households. Very few know what is going on under their own eyes, but they know everything about their friends."

Lecompte looked at the actress as if a little annoyed at this severe arraignment. "Perhaps," he said, eyeing her as if asking a question, "it is better for me to remain here, even under the disgrace to my name. I can retire from society; that is, I have been retired, and will enjoy myself the best I may."

"It is a wise resolve, monsieur. Do not sacrifice your business; you will have friends until fortune deserts you, and that is as long as any one has them."

"Mlle. Legendre," said Lecompte, taking her by the hand, at which there was only a feeble resistance, "I have come to have great confidence in you."

"I am flattered, monsieur."

"I admired you when we first met, and that admiration has grown to love. I hope that it has found a response in your heart."

"I fear that I am unworthy of you, as I am only an actress."

"There are many worthy ladies on the stage. I have confidence in you, no matter if society frowns upon those of your profession. Do you return my confidence and love? My suit for divorce has been granted, and I make this proposal in earnest."

She bowed her head and remained silent. Then she turned her eyes upon his, as if to fathom his sincerity. They gazed at each other a second, which is a long time for lovers; her lips seemed to move and Lecompte clasped her in his arms.

The banns were published and the wedding took place in the St. Louis Cathedral two weeks later.

DOUBLE STARS

MANY stars that appear single to the naked eye are found to consist of two stars close together when examined through a powerful telescope. They are called double stars, and several thousands have been observed by astronomers.

There are two classes of double stars. The first consists of those that only look double. These appear double because they are nearly in the same line of vision as seen from the earth, though they have no connection, and one star may be very much nearer to us than the other. The second class consists of those really double, or binary stars, where one star revolves about the other or where each revolves around the centre of gravity common to the pair, forming what is called a binary system.

Many double stars have been found to perform such a revolution. This is generally very slow, requiring centuries for its completion. A few binary stars, however, revolve so rapidly that a complete revolution has taken place since they were first observed. There are some whose period is less than a century.

The colors of double stars are superbly brilliant and varied. The components often shine in contrast colors, one being blue and the other yellow, or one being green and the other yellow. Sometimes the companions are purple and white or red and white, or both are white.

A few stars are known as naked-eye doubles. One is a small star in Lyra, near the bright Vega. A sharp-eyed observer may see it double, says the *Washington Star*. A low power of the telescope will separate it into two white stars wide apart. A high power will separate each of the two components into two stars. This tiny star is, therefore, a double double, forming a quadruple system.

A beautiful double star easy to find is Albiree. One of the components is of the third and the other of the fifth magnitude. The colors are golden yellow and sapphine blue.

Mystery Magazine

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

1 "The Eel Man," by Robert Carlton Brown.
2 "Zitana of Maison Rouge," by F. W. Doughty.
3 "The Mysterious Web," by Armstrong Perry.
4 "Under the Hypnotic Spell," by Dr. H. Enton.
5 "The Silken Sheath," by Crittenden Marriott.
6 "A Fortune Teller's Secret," by Gladys Hall.
7 "The Mystic Emblem," by Marie Coolidge Rask.
8 "The Cards of Fate," by William Goode.
9 "Mr. Bachellor's Apartments," by W. H. Osborne.
10 "The Inner Wheel," by Octavius Roy Cohen.
11 "The Voice of the Valley," by Robt. C. Brown.
12 "The Sign of the Seven Sharks," by Chas. F. Oursler.
13. "Under a Mask," by Crittenden Marriott.
14 "Case 4,444," by Gladys Hall.
15 "After a Million," by Police Captain Howard.
16 "Shadowing the Blue Triangle," by Chas. F. Oursler.
17 "The Case of Captain Fortesque," by Redfield Ingalls.
18 "The Bird-Headed Sphinx," by Edith S. Tupper.
19 "The Double Mystery," by Dr. Harry Enton.
20 "The Magician Detective," by C. F. Oursler.
21 "King Cobra Mystery," by George Gilbert.
22 "The Haunted Corridors," by Wm. H. Osborne.
23 "No Man's Man," by Maxwell Smith.
24 "The Trevor Puzzle," by T. C. Harbaugh.
25 "The Trail of Roses," by Edmund Condon.
26 "The Hindoo Vanishing Clue," by Pauline C. Bouve.
27 "Who Was Guilty?" by Beulah Poynter.
28 "The Evil Eye," by Chas. F. Oursler.
29. "The Thirteenth Door," by Edith Sessions Tupper.
30 "The Game of Detective Carew," by L. Jerome.
31 "Law-maker and Law-breaker," by Beulah Poynter.
32 "The Counterfeit Heiress," by Inspector J. Harrigan.
33 "Tracked to China," by Chief Roger O'Brien.
34 "After the German Spies," by May Halsey Miller.
35 "The Clue in the Box," by Alexander Douglas.
36 "Trained by a French Detective," by Rene Renaud.
37 "A Drop of Ink," by Lieutenant Robt. W. Warden.
38 "The Ten Doctors," by Allan Arnold Fox.
39 "The Stain on Page 61," by Chas. T. Jordan.
40 "A Masked Mystery," by Police Sergeant Kelly.
41 "The Black Soul," by Beulah Poynter.
42 "The Sanctuary," by William Hamilton Osborne.
43 "The Mystery of the Seven Shadows," by C. F. Oursler.
44 "The Sign on the Dragon," by C. Martin Eddy, Jr.
45 "The Magic of Detective Woo Fang," by Frank F. Whitfield.
46 "The Decoy," by William Hamilton Osborne.
47 "The House With 30 Steps," by Ralph D. Porter.
48 "When the Clock Struck 13," by Dr. Harry Enton.
49 "A Piece of Blotting Paper," by Dorothy Weber.
50 "The $200,000 Mystery," by Ethel Rosemon.
51 "The Case of Dr. Brice," by Mary R. P. Hatch.
52 "The Phantom Motor," by Laura Reid Montgomery.
53 "The Blackjack," by William Hamilton Osborne.
54 "The Whispering Head," by Chas. F. Oursler.
55 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by B. Poynter.
56 "The Secret of the Sealed Book," by Ethel Rosemon.
57 "The Clue of Steel," by Willis Lathrop.
58 "Alias Louis Vardon," by William H. Osborne.
59 "Mystery of the Old-Time Club," by C. Bingold.
60 "Caught With the Evidence," by Ethel Rosemon.
61 "A Little Gold Spider," by Cecil Burleigh.
62 "The Velvet Touch," by Julian Darrow.
63 "The Clue of the Red Lamp," by Chas. F. Oursler.
64 "The Scheme of Solomon Snare," by W. H. Osborne.
65 "Quicker Than the Eye," by Ralph Cummins.
66 "The Clue of the Dark Room," by Hamilton Craigie.
67 "The Tongue of Osiris," by Marc Edmund Jones.
68 "Detective Wade's Big Case," by Ethel Rosemon.
69 "The Spirit Bell," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
70 "The House Behind the Wall," by Julian Darrow.
71 "The Admiral's Spoons," by Wm. H. Osborne.
72 "The Canine Clue," by Thos. J. Lally.
73 "The Psychic Enemy," by Arthur Wm. Andreen.
74 "The Wonder Girl," by Ralph Cummins.
75 "On the Wrong Trail," by Ethel Rosemon.
76 "The Spirit Witness," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
77 "On the Wrong Trail," by Ethel Rosemon.
78 "The Stolen Year," by Edmund Elliot.
79 "The Affair at Hollywood House," by Wm. Kofoed.
80 "A Reyless Mystery," by Hamilton Craigie.
81 "Professor Satan," by Charles Fulton Oursler.
82 "Who Killed McNally?" by Beulah Poynter.
83 "The Clue of the Whorl," by Katherine Stagg.
84 "The 'Czar' and the Ring," by Edmund Elliot.
85 "A Clue of Flame," by Jack Bechdolt.
86 "The Face in the Crowd," by Marc Edmund Jones.
87 "The Man in Room No. 7," by Chas. F. Oursler.
88 "Four Ten-Dollar Bills," by Henry G. Howland.
89. "A Challenge to Power," by Dr. Harry Enton.
90 "The House Next-Door," by Police Captain Howard.
91 "The Trance Detective," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
92 "Friday at Twelve," by Katherine Stagg.
93 "By the Left Hand," by Hamilton Craigie.
94 "The Melody of Death," by Jack Bechdolt.
95 "The Trick of the Great Yen How," by William Hamilton Osborne.
96 "At Moriarty's," by Fred S. Shuey.
97 "The Last Star of the Films," by Jack Bechdolt.
98 "Counterfeit Clues," by Chas. F. Oursler.
99 "The Cross," by W. S. Ingram.
100 "A Secret Service Mystery," by Hamilton Craigie and Elliot Balestier.
101 "A Crimson Price," by Elliott Lester.
102 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by Gottlieb Jacobs.
103 "A Museum Mystery," by Jack Bechdolt.
104 "The Little Red Book," by J. Alexander Young.
105 "A Man from Siam," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
106 "The Clue of the Emerald Ring," by Beulah Poynter.
107 "Hell's Hinges," by Hamilton Craigie.
108 "The Wolf," by Katherine Stagg.
109 "The Brass Button," by Jack Bechdolt.
110 "A Whispering Mummy," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
111 "Trapping the Jewel Smugglers," by Beulah Poynter.
112 "The Missing Evidence," by Harold F. Podhaski.
113 "A Clue by Radio," by Capt. Jack Static.
114 "The District Attorney's Secret," by Chas. F. Oursler.
115 "A Man From Headquarters," by Hamilton Craigie.

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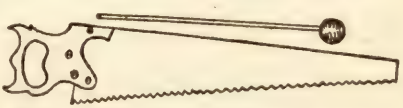

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